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[IN THE CONVENT GARDEN. FORGETTING THE PAST.]

SNOWDROP'S FORTUNES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE visit of Mr. and Mrs. Sayers to Overcliffe came to an end rather prematurely, for Lady Wrexham was very ill after the interview with the lawyer, who, before he went away, had some significant conversation with his host. Lord Wrexham looked worried and ill, but it was in some sort a relief to him that his wife knew everything there was to be told.

She had suspected that there was a woman in the case, and that her husband was deceiving her, and leading a double life in some way. True there been a woman, but she had never shared Rupert's love with any one; he had been on the eve of committing a great crime, when death stepped in and stopped him.

She knew that he had married her with some secret in his heart which even her woman's wit had not been able to find out; but she knew enough of him to be sure he was speaking the

truth when he answered a question which she put to him on the eve of her wedding-day, and told her, looking her straight in the face, that there was no woman on earth to whom he owed any allegiance but herself. She tried to think that it was his father's troubles (for her husband was only Rupert Carlyon for some time after they were married) that made him so silent and depressed. She was aware that her money had saved the old Earl from ruin and set him in a position to better his affairs; indeed his son knew that the timely rescue had probably saved his life. He had implored Rupert to take the step that made him the husband of the handsomest woman of the season almost with tears, and had told his son that he would not live to face the open dishonour that would come with the revelation of his bankruptcy.

And Rupert had bowed his head and consented, and the earl was saved—saved to become once more a rich man before he died—and to leave one of the largest fortunes in England to the eldest child of his son, the little lady Laura Carlyon, of whom he was proud and fond after the fashion of grandpapas in general.

He did not stop to think that there might be other children whom such a will would render comparative paupers; but it seemed as if the Fates had ordained that Laura was to share her fortune with no one.

Lady Wrexham was apt to complain that her husband did not care for the child, and laid it to the fact that a daughter and not an heir, as she had hoped, had come to bless their union. She wronged her husband, or rather she saw nothing below the surface. Lord Wrexham loved his child with passionate tenderness, and would caress her with a vehemence that almost frightened the little one on the rare occasions when he had her to himself. It might be that his wife's coldness and stand-off manner had a good deal to do with his oddity, for he certainly was very odd for the first few years of their life together.

Another child came to them, also a girl, whom the Earl with a strange persistency would have called by a name that was not in either family. Her mother would have chosen a string of high-sounding appellations for her new daughter. "Not that it would matter much," she said, with a sigh; the child would be a

pauper by the side of her sister, but she hated single names, and nothing but plain Geraldine would do for the Earl." It was a horrid name, she declared, suggestive of witches and all sorts of horrors, but her husband would have it, and she could only fancy he was a little wrong in his head.

The name did not signify much for long; the little child of whom Lord Wrexham seemed as fond as he appeared careless of his first-born, faded away out of the world, and left nothing but a record on the wall of the church—a spotless tablet with a broken lily—to tell that she had ever lived.

Lady Wrexham had been looking back on all these past events, when Mr. Sayers insisted on seeing her and making the revelation to her which seemed to suddenly take all the life out of her heart, and the strength out of her limbs. No wonder she was ill, poor lady. No wonder that she could see no one after that fatal interview, and that the guests made a hurried departure from Overcliffe.

Mr. Sayers had told her without any beating about the bush that he held the fortunes of her daughter in his hand; that a word from him could transfer little Laura's wealth to another child, her father's legal daughter, and leave her with nothing but what the Earl could give her, or leave her when he died. And Lady Wrexham scarcely knew how little that was, nor how much of his lordship's money had been finding its way into the pockets of the lawyer for a long time past.

He disliked her, and was glad of the chance of humiliating her, and spared her nothing of the painful details. Rupert Carlyon had loved and married a young girl before he had given his promise to his father to win the heiress. And—but that death had stepped in and freed him—he would have done her the additional wrong of marrying her while his first wife was alive. He was flying to the Continent with her, intending to hide her somewhere, and come back and work his own ruin by committing bigamy.

Providence had stepped in and prevented the crime before it was too late, and Rupert Carlyon had gone to the altar with his heart in the grave of the woman he had loved so passionately, and mourned so deeply. No wonder he was absent and distraught, and that his bride thought she had just cause for questioning his conduct. She little thought what a torn and lacerated heart he was giving her, in all truth and honour, for he vowed as he knelt there with her at his side to be a true and faithful husband to her while they should be spared to one another.

And so he had been; she had nothing to complain of in that way. But of late his worry and abstraction had seemed to begin again, and Mr. Sayers told her why; told her what seemed to freeze the blood in her veins—that Laura was not the heiress—there was a child born of the marriage which had turned out so disastrously, and that he had her in his keeping, and could produce her at any moment. She knew who it was without being told—the little show-girl that everybody had remarked was so like her own cherished child. She was the eldest daughter, and the heiress if the truth was ever found out.

Mr. Sayers assured her that it need never be disclosed—that he had it in his keeping, and meant to be faithful—and spoke to her in such tones of insolent familiarity as made her blood boil, and tempted her to tell him to do his worst, and ruin them if he would. But the fainting fit stopped what angry words were on her tongue; and when she recovered it was to find her husband sitting beside her, and to listen to his passionate entreaties that she would do nothing rash—that she would think it over with him—and, above everything, be silent for the present.

He had listened to the voice of the tempter in the person of the unscrupulous lawyer till he had come to see the matter with his eyes, and to think that the wrong that had been already done could be condoned, and things made straight by providing secretly for the

child who could never know anything of her birth, and paying Mr. Sayers for keeping silence.

"No one else knows it, Laura," he said, "not a creature in the world. I was not recognised on that dreadful journey; Sayers managed everything without my appearing—the child is well cared for—and—"

"And some time she will suddenly appear—perhaps when the future of our own darling is settled, and destroy all her hopes then. Rupert I wish I had died when she was born; I was very near death then. It would have been a mercy if I and the child had both been taken; you would have been able to acknowledge your daughter, and to mourn for your dead wife in peace."

He winced as she spoke; he had never ceased to mourn for that short-lived happiness; and yet, had he known it, the wife he had lost had been a very baby; a spoiled child without much brains, and with no self-control. He had been blinded by love, or he would have seen the heartlessness of her conduct in running away from a widowed father who doted on her, and have been disgusted by her many caprices. But he had lost her just when a new love was springing up in their hearts, and the miserable manner of her death in that way-side public-house, and his having to leave her to others to bury, all combined to make him think of her with tenderness that would never wear itself out.

"I shall never forget my dead wife," he said, gently. "But when I gave my heart into your keeping, Laura, I did not halve it; as for the rest, I honestly believed the child to be dead for a long time; it had disappeared with the woman who had charge of it, and I never heard anything about it till we saw her at the same time in that showman's booth."

"It may be all a mistake," Lady Wrexham said, eagerly; "some other child that had hair and eyes like that other person."

"No," her husband said, shaking his head, "The thing has been tracked out pretty well; it is the same child that was born on that night—my daughter without a doubt; she has been recognized by more than one person."

"Then the secret is not a secret at all, and Laura—my Laura—will be a beggar?"

"I did not say that, wife; she has been recognized as the child born that night, but not as my daughter. Two people have seen her, and know her for the same."

"Who are they?"

"You had better be ignorant of the knowledge, dear—it will do you no good to know."

"It is too late to say that to me now; tell me all there is to be told about it; it will be better for us both."

"I wish I had told you all there was to be told long ago," Lord Wrexham said, with a sigh. "It would have been better than all these years of estrangement and coldness one to another. You will let them end now, Laura? They have made me very unhappy, my dear."

"I will bury the past when I know that child is dead," said her ladyship, half-hysterically, "when I know that nothing stands between my Laura and the fortune that is hers by every right. Rupert—you are her father—you will not let her be wronged; she is your child; put it out of any one's power to take her money away from her."

"My dear Laura, you hardly know what you are saying—what you are hinting at," Lord Wrexham said, aghast at what her words implied. "If we are civil to Sayers, and I can comply with his demands—and you will do what you can to be a friend to his wife—the secret is safe; he wants to get into what society he can; she is a vain, ignorant fool, who thinks that having a lady of title for her acquaintance the very next thing to being in the peerage herself; and you can do a great deal with her if you will. He is the only person who can connect me with that right; she knows nothing, except that I am indebted to her husband in some way. The other people who have recognized the little girl only know

her as the baby born then; they have no idea of her parentage."

"Who are they?"

"One is the man in whose house she was born; he has sunk down to the very lowest depths since then; Sayers has disposed of him effectually—he is out of the country. The other—"

"Who is the other?"

"The doctor who was called in. We have heard in a roundabout way that he knew the child at once; she has the brand on her shoulder as our little Geraldine had."

"Had that child's name anything to do with this business?" suddenly asked Lady Wrexham, looking her husband straight in the face, with a hard expression in her eyes.

"Yes; her name was Geraldine."

"Then I am glad my baby died," his wife said; "I could not have borne to know what she reminded you of."

"It is as well," he said sadly, "The heart-ache would have worn itself out perhaps in time, but the memory would always have been there."

"And has the heartache gone, Rupert?"

There was more of tenderness in Lady Wrexham's voice than she had shown to her husband for many a day, and there was a smile in his eyes as he answered her instantly and frankly:

"Quite; you would have found that out long ago if you had tried, Laura."

He drew her to him as he spoke, and she let her head rest on his shoulder. She really loved him, and it was pleasant to have this misunderstanding cleared up, even by the revelation of this terrible secret.

"About this doctor," she said; "will he be dangerous? How much does he know?"

"Nothing, but that he officiated at the birth of the child. The messenger that Mr. Sayers sent to Cornwall to fetch the little girl heard of his having recognized her in a roundabout sort of way. He made no secret of it, or it would have hardly been talked about in the way it was."

CHAPTER XIX.

"SOMETHING must be done, Rupert," and Lady Wrexham looked at her lord with feverish eyes, "something to make my darling safe; I cannot have my daughter wronged."

"There is nothing to do," he replied; "no one knows anything; the child is removed and is safe, she will not be left to starve, but she will be prevented from knowing anything. There is no link to connect her with me in any way."

"But your marriage, Rupert; you were married in a church?"

"Yes."

"And in your own name?"

"Yes."

"Then the certificate is there to tell of it; there is danger everywhere."

"There is nothing to tell that any child was born of that marriage; we did not stay there at all, and we passed by another name afterwards; there are no links in the chain except what Sayers holds."

"And will he hold them?"

"For his own sake he will; a milch cow is better than a dead ox, as I heard some one say the other day; if he revealed the secret he could make no more money out of it."

"And I suppose you have been paying him heavily?"

"Heavily enough to account for my stinginess to you, Laura; but now that there is no secret between you and me, I shall put things on a different footing. As long as that child lives and is cared for Sayers shall receive a settled sum and—"

"But she may die, something may happen to her," said Lady Wrexham, with eager eyes.

"May—but it is not likely; we must make the best of it now, wife; I have had to do it with no one to help me for some time; we must keep a fair face to the world."

"Yes; with the sword of Damocles hanging

over our heads—our whole future in that man's hands."

"He is to be trusted. I have found it so."

"Yes, if you go on paying him and increasing his pay. Rupert, I shall die of the worry and humiliation."

"I have not died of it yet," Lord Wrexham said, quietly. "And now that I have told my wife the whole miserable truth I think she will try and help me to bear it. It must be kept secret, Laura, if it costs us our whole fortune. I cannot do Laura such a grievous wrong as to disinherit her now."

"But the other one, what about her? If it is all true, she is the heiress."

"She loses nothing because she knows nothing; she will be provided for and brought up in respectability. My poor little child! Her mother's image."

"How comes it she resembles Laura so much?"

"She does not particularly; to me she is more like her mother. I suppose she must resemble me as well—hence the likeness to our Laura."

"She is very like her. Why those miserable people that came here actually thought they had found the one they had."

"I am sorry for that man," Lord Wrexham said, half to himself; "whatever he is, he is a respectable fellow in his own line of life; and there was no question of the way in which the child was treated by him and his wife."

"Would it not have been better to have ignored the matter altogether?" Lady Wrexham asked, thoughtfully.

"No, with the danger of recognition everywhere; I think Sayers has provided for contingencies in the best way. Fortescue is on the track, or trying to be, I am sure of that; and the only way to stop him was to end the matter at once, as I have done, by sending the child away."

Lady Wrexham questioned her husband no further at that time the illness; that supervened on the shock she had received made conversation impossible for a time; and all she could do was to think and put things together, understanding at last much that had been mysterious and strange to her in the years that had passed since she married Rupert Carlyon. She was startled and shocked beyond measure, and terrified at the probability that this strange child might—unless something she hardly dared to think of was done—come to dispossess her darling of her property and bring ruin on them all; but with all this she was happier than she had been for some time. The dread that was upon her in spite of his protestations that her husband was playing her false had all vanished—there was nothing to stand between her and her duty as a wife, and the knowledge seemed to make her heart grow lighter as she recovered from her temporary indisposition.

She would have to be very civil to Mrs. Sayers in the future, and to her vulgar husband, too; she must conciliate Arthur Fortescue as well, and find out, as only a woman could, what he was doing, and how much he knew. She had not asked her husband point blank whether the girl whom he had loved and married was the missing cousin she had heard Mr. Fortescue speak of. But she guessed it to be the same; she had a vague idea that the young lady's name had been Geraldine, more from fancy than actual knowledge. She had heard the story from more than one person of how the father of the girl had given his consent to an engagement between the parties, who were both very young; and how the young lady had suddenly vanished, leaving nothing to tell where or with whom she had gone, and nothing had been ever heard of her afterwards.

She could understand it now. Rupert's father had revealed his difficulties to his son just after his secret marriage; and a union with a wealthy heiress was pointed out as the only way to retrieve the position that was well nigh lost. No wonder Arthur Fortescue had looked at the little girl at the fair—what ages ago all that seemed now—as if he knew her! Her's was too striking a face to be lightly passed over; and Lady Wrexham could only hope that

she was so carefully bestowed where she was that no return to England would be possible.

She would have been pretty well satisfied if she could have seen the place where Mr. Sayers had bestowed the little one who passed as his wife's niece. There was small chance of her escaping from the Sisterhood under whose care she had been placed; they had a great many girls in the convent, but very few of them with the strong will and energy of Eugenie Ravelle. They were most of them orphans, some of them children of whom their parents were ashamed, and at least two-thirds of them intended for a religious life by their guardians.

Eugenie Ravelle was different. Her frivolous mother wanted to be rid of her. And the girl was far too lively and excitable for a convent life. She had rebelled furiously at first, and scandalized the Sisters with all sorts of indecorous attempts to establish a communication with the outside world; but she had been worsted in the conflict with the superior powers, and so severely punished for her escapades that she had resolved upon another course and tried implicit outward obedience and submission to the rules, and inward determination to throw the Sisters off their guard, and outwit them instead of defying them.

She succeeded so perfectly that her escape was not discovered till she was beyond pursuit, and the Lady Superior had to bear with what meekness she might the vituperation heaped upon her and all connected with the convent, by the angry mother of the missing girl.

"I trusted her to you," she said, "as I would have trusted her to the saints, and you have let her go; she will go headlong to perdition all the quicker for the discipline she has been subjected to here."

"She has deceived us all," the Lady Superior said, quietly. "We thought her so good, so pure—one of our most gentle children—the Holy Mother's chosen care," and she crossed herself devoutly as she spoke. "Her defection had cut us to the heart."

"She shall come back," said Madame Ravelle, passionately; "you must take better care of her next time—she cannot have gone far—she must be found."

But she was not found, and the mother had to put up with the anxiety and alarm of her daughter's loss as best she might. Poor little "Esther Craven" missed her terribly; it was well for the child, perhaps, that the elder girl was gone; if she had remained in the convent, she would have taught the new comer to be as deceitful as herself, and made her life more uncomfortable by reason of the schemes and plans for something better that she would have put into her head.

For a little while Snowdrop was very unhappy—she could not get over the heart-ache that had come of the wrench which had separated her from the only parents she had ever known; and night after night her pillow was wet with her tears, as she lay and thought of Job and his wife, and all the surroundings of her old travelling home. She pictured their distress at her loss, and the meagre fashion in which the performances would go on without her. She little thought they had stopped altogether, poor child. And she tried to take comfort in the thought of how they had learned she was alive and well, and that she had been restored to her real relations—for she never thought of doubting that Mrs. Sayers was her aunt—and she wondered how the big brooch she had bought for Mrs. Pott's looked on that worthy lady's ample bosom, and how Job liked the pipe and tobacco-pouch which she had purchased so proudly for him.

She little thought that none of these things had found their way to their destination, or that her foster-father had been well nigh at death's door after the shock and trouble of her disappearance. She was not allowed to speak of such things in the convent; the Sisters were not unkind to her as they understood unkindness. The children under their charge had enough to eat, and suitable clothing to wear, and there were splendid grounds to the convent where they might play in a certain

fashion which was hardly play, but it was something.

Snowdrop came to wonder sometimes whether she was not some one else, as she looked at her black dress and oddly-made pinafore which made the girls look something like the sisters themselves, and her closely-cropped head—for the first thing done to her after her reception by the Sisters was to cut off her hair, and make her look like the rest of the prim little band that assembled before the Reverend Mother to be catechised and admonished before beginning the duties of the day.

Religious duties, school—often interrupted for some time for prayers, or visits from the directors of the Sisters, and preparations for festivals, which were held out as rewards to the children; processions in the handsome church, one of the most celebrated in Paris for its beauty and the artistic fitness of its adornments, and all the religious paraphernalia which impresses the eye, and leaves its record on the mind—soon had their effect on the little girl, and helped to efface in a great measure the memory of what had happened to her. Not the memory, perhaps—that is too much to say—but the keen pain that attends the separation from all her old friends. It took all the child's time, and all her sense, and discretion—and she was not wanting in either—to perform her tasks to the satisfaction of the Sisters, and to escape the punishments and penalties that were the fate of those who neglected or disobeyed orders.

She could hardly understand, poor child, why she must never speak of the time when she was Snowdrop, and the chief attraction of her foster-father's booth, or tell her companions of the many places she had seen, or the varied life she had spent. It was all wicked and wrong, these new friends of her's told her, and a thing only to be atoned for by much prayer and strict attention to duty, which seemed to her new ideas to be the be-all and end-all of a woman's life.

Truly the sunshine was taken out of her existence by these good women, whose only motive was to make her good and pure as they themselves were, and who did good in silence and secret every hour of their lives, and believed that Heaven was to be won by much fasting and penance and the renunciation of every thing that makes life pleasant and happy to their unfettered sisters outside their convent walls. They were to make "Esther Craven" fit for a convent life, their orders ran. It was what her friends wished for her. There was no order to treat her with harshness, or even to force her inclination; but she was to be led and guided by them till she should embrace it, if that could be done at by her own free will. And the good Sisters needed no more congenial task, nor could they have found anything that would have suited their ideas better than the reparation of this little stray lamb for the fold of the Good Shepherd she had once gone out into the world to seek.

CHAPTER XX.

THE world said "that something had happened to Lady Wrexham that season. She was no longer the imperious dame asserting her dignity, and rather fond of parading her importance. She seemed cowed and downcast like a woman whose life was suddenly altered by some misfortune."

Her dear friends wondered what could possibly be the matter with her, and generally surmised that the Earl had lost money. Nothing else could possibly afflict her ladyship so deeply or bring such a shadow on her face. It was not that she seemed exactly low spirited so much as nervous. She had been used to despise people who gave way to nerves and hysterics, and to set them down as ill-bred and commonplace. She never did such things, but now after the illness—which had kept her at Overcliffe a good fortnight longer than she had

intended to stay at the seaside—the least thing seemed to startle her.

Her colour would come and go at the sound of a strange footstep, and she had been seen to clasp little Lady Laura in her arms with a gesture of affright at the sudden appearance of strangers. It was all very puzzling, the more so as the low spirits which appeared to have become chronic with her husband of late had disappeared, and he had become brighter; and he and his wife had evidently been on much more cordial terms than they had been for years.

No explanation was offered, and society talked and wondered as it listed without getting any nearer the truth. If it had done so—the real story of her ladyship's nervousness, and her husband's altered manner could have got abroad—what a nine days' wonder it would have been. But, of all their acquaintances, Arthur Fortescue alone guessed the truth.

"She knows," he said to himself one day after an interview with Lady Wrexham, in which the arrangements of a garden-party had been carried out, and she had shrunk in disgust from the proposal some one made to have some show-people in the grounds—real nomadic folks, who should be engaged to show what was done at fairs, to the grand folks who would feel themselves contaminated by the atmosphere of shows in their native purity.

"Oh, don't do anything of that sort," she said, "I have had a horror of that sort of people ever since you made me go with you at Warwick. I shall never forget the dreadful things you made me look at."

"We saw some things that were not dreadful," Mr. Fortescue said; "for instance, the conjuring man and his whole troupe—he has left off his business, he tells me, since he lost his little girl. But there are plenty more of the same profession—I believe they call it a profession—and this season they seem quite the rage at parties where the grounds are large enough to admit of their being engaged without the chance of anyone having to come in contact with them."

"Don't," said Lady Wrexham, for he was looking her straight in the face as he spoke; "I cannot bear to think of such a thing. Only fancy having your place defiled by people who do not understand the commonest decencies of life. Why they live and cook, and sleep all where they perform, do they not? How can you propose such a thing?"

She had turned so deathly pale that he was afraid he was carrying his test too far, and she would faint.

"She knows," he said to himself. "I have been on the right track all along. It was Rupert Carlyon who robbed me of my love, and changed the current of my whole life; let him look to himself if ever I find out he has wronged that child."

He guessed from all he had seen and heard that if Lord Wrexham was the cause of his cousin's loss, that he had married her, there would have been no necessity for the spiriting away of the little girl if she did not stand in the way of some one; and the wording of the will of the late Earl was explanation enough of all that had happened. But he had no clue to how it had been done, or what had become of the child, and all his cautious inquiries had come to nothing.

Job Potts could tell nothing, and the messenger that had been sent to carry off Snow-drop was far away across the sea. There was nothing for it but to trust to time and keep on the alert. He would say nothing to Lord Wrexham for the present. If ever he could succeed in tracking the daughter of his ill-fated cousin and early love there would have to be a reckoning with his lordship. All was dark at present; no proof even of the marriage was to be found; and he had searched and caused to be searched more church registers than he would have thought possible in the vain effort to come across it.

Lady Wrexham was very much frightened at the evident meaning in his manner and words to her; and she thought and thought

over it till she felt as if her brain would give way.

"Something must be done," she said to herself; "something to make things sure, or I shall go mad. It is no use talking to Rupert; he is timid, and under the sway of that man Sayers. I wonder what I could do? I wonder if—" and her eyes dilated and her cheek flushed at the sudden idea which had taken possession of her mind. "What if I go and see him? will he be silent and willing? Such things have been done before now thousands of times, I daresay, without any one knowing. If I can only persuade him, if money will do it, Rupert will thank me, will bless me when it is over, and I have saved him."

She rang the bell and asked the servant who answered it if his lordship was at home.

"I think not, my lady," was the answer.

"Find out; and if he is not at home, when he is likely to return."

"Very good, my lady."

The man went his way, and presently came back with the intelligence that his lordship would not be at home for some time; he had left a note for her ladyship, which had been put on her *boudoir* table. It was to the effect that he was not sure whether he should dine at home—in all probability not—for he had met a friend he had not seen for some time, and was going to Chiswick with him, and from thence to the Club; it was most likely they should spend the evening together.

"It is as if it was to be," she said, as she hastily ordered the carriage, and retired to her room to dress. She would go at once while her thought was fresh in her mind, and see what could be done. A beautiful high-bred woman she looked as she stepped into her carriage and gave the order to the coachman, "Swan and Edgar's, Regent Street entrance." She had been very pale of late, but the excitement of her purpose had given her a colour, and she had never looked handsomer even in her youth. Little Lady Laura, who caught sight of her as she was going out petitioned to go with her; she was in the habit of being exhibited in the carriage along with her mother; there was not a more beautiful mother and child in all the fashionable world; but to-day Lady Wrexham had other business to attend to than showing her daughter and herself off.

"Not to day, darling," she said, "I have some dreary shopping to do. I do not like little girls sitting in shops for so long. To-morrow, if you are a good girl, we will have a first-rate drive together."

"You look so pretty to-day, mamma," the little girl said; "I should like to sit by you and see the people look at you."

"You little vanity," the mother said, with a smile and a sigh. "I hope I shall look just as well to-morrow; run away now, dear, Hartley is waiting to put me into the carriage."

Hartley, as stately a serving man as ever waited on a fair lady, gravely assisted his mistress into her seat, and heard her give the order, and then went back to his place.

"I needn't look for my lady for the next two hours, if she goes nowhere else," he said to himself; "once she gets into that shop when the season's fashions are new, she don't come out in a hurry. I shall have time to run into the Strand to see how things are getting on."

Hartley had some little speculations of his own afoot in certain building and other societies, and he was fond of snatching a minute, when he could get it, to have an interview with the managing powers, and hearing how his ventures were doing. Business led him a little farther, and into Gray's Inn, where he saw something that filled him with astonishment; it was nothing less than the spectacle of Lady Wrexham—whom he had believed safe at Swan and Edgar's and other fashionable shops for a good two hours—getting out of a cab at the door of a dingy pile of buildings, where a dozen or more names on the door posts announced that as many lawyers of various grades did business there.

(To be continued).

SIR ORIEL'S WOOING.

CHAPTER IX.

PERIL AND KISSES.

To the surprise of their friends Theo Martindale and Ethel Lanyon managed to get ashore without even going through the preliminary process of a cold bath.

They were both of them good swimmers, and they had almost made up their minds to disregard the advice shouted to them from the shore and trust themselves to the comparatively smooth water rather than remain where they were, to suffer the discomforts of exposure and hunger, when fortunately the boat from Polper, which the people had sent for came in sight, and with some difficulty and at great risk the reckless couple were got into it; and by dint of combined skill and caution they were rowed part of the way, and then taken in the arms of strong men and carried to dry land.

"And now I'm so hungry, Miss Killigrew, that I am ready to eat anything," exclaimed Ethel, in high good spirits, as soon as they joined the party on Tor Balk.

"I think we are all in very much the same condition," replied Kate. "We have been so anxious about you two that we have not begun our luncheon."

"Oh, I am so sorry, and at the same time I am so hungry. Why, what is the matter with you, mother? You were not afraid I was going to be drowned, were you?"

"Not at all," was the careless reply. "But I have caught a cold sitting up here so long. I think I will have a glass of sherry if you will get me one, Mr. Fermor."

The lieutenant at once did as desired, and then the whole party sat down to the ample provision made for their comfort.

But a change had come over them.

Max von Rubinstein seemed to have forgotten the widow's presence, and he assiduously devoted himself to Kate Killigrew, while she, in the character of hostess, could not treat him with the distant politeness she would like to have shown.

At the same time, his sister Bertha adroitly managed to get up a low-toned conversation with Sir Oriel Graystock, by whose side she had secured a seat.

"It was such a delightful surprise to my brother to meet Katie again," she said softly; "and she, I think, was quite as happy to see him. It is strange how these things come about, is it not?"

"What things?" asked the baronet, curiously.

"The meeting of those who have loved and been parted, and who meet again when Fate will perhaps be kinder to them than in the past," sighed the Fraulein, who had lived a long time in England, and to whom English was as familiar as her mother tongue.

"And is that the case with your brother and my cousin?" asked Sir Oriel, sharply.

"Yes," was the answer. "They should have been married years ago, but friends interfered, and so they parted."

Sir Oriel asked no further questions; for he had no desire to pry into the affairs of his cousin, and, moreover, he felt too much pained at the knowledge that she had once loved another man, to dare to trust himself to talk about her.

But though he was silent he watched Kate and Herr Max so gloomily that she once met his eye, and she smiled so sweetly and so trustfully upon him that for the moment all his doubts vanished.

Of course Ethel was the noisiest member of the party, but her light chatter, kept up with three or four people at once, served to amuse the greater portion of the party, while the girl herself was delighted at having Theo, Martindale, Ralph Fermor, and the Count in attendance upon her.

Mrs. Lanyon, on the other hand, though well looked after by the servants, was sadly neglected by the gentlemen of the party.

This was rather hard upon the widow, for she had grown no older since her daughter's arrival upon the scene, though what her real age must be had, of course, become rather more apparent.

But Mrs. Lanyon was for the first time in her life unconscious of this neglect.

She had eyes and ears and thoughts, but for one person only. The one overmastering passion of her life had been for Max von Rubenstein, and though it had slumbered for years, it had come back upon her now with redoubled violence, and she had neither the power nor the will to resist it, while her heart was growing hot within her as she saw how the only man she had ever really loved seemed to hang upon Kate Killigrew's every word and gesture.

The meal was over at last to the great relief of more than one of those partaking of it, and soon as the party rose to their feet Mrs. Lanyon in a somewhat marked manner walked up to Herr von Rubenstein, and said,—

"I want to have a chat with you, Max," and thereupon she took his arm, and to the astonishment of himself no less than of his friends, led him away.

It had been previously arranged that as soon as luncheon was over they should all walk by the cliff path to Lizard Town, where tea was to be ready.

Kate looked at her cousin Oriel in amused wonder, and the mischievous fun that danced in her eyes prompted him to say:

"Suppose we follow their example, Kate, and walk on together."

Miss Killigrew smiled, and took the arm her cousin offered her, though she mildly protested.

"They are evidently going to have an explanation. What have we to talk about that wouldn't be interesting to all the rest?"

"Something very important, I assure you," was the half-jesting, half-grave reply. "Come and listen."

Theo and Ethel climbed a lofty hill, and sat there silently enjoying the vast expanse of sea and land that lay stretched out before them. Then she said:

"Do you know I think Sir Oriel is awfully spoons on Kate."

"Do you?" asked Theo.

"Yes," was the serious reply; "I've been watching them, and I'm quite sure he's over head and ears in love with her. I wonder if she cares about him."

"Impossible for me to offer an opinion," said Theo; "my experience of that sort of thing is very limited. I only know that I am 'awful spoons,' as you call it, on a girl whom I'm afraid doesn't care a rap for me."

"Are you, though; dear, dear, who is it?"

"I can't tell you; I dare not."

"But you must—I want to know. The idea of telling me so much, and not telling me more. Who is the girl; do I know her?"

He shook his head, as he replied: "I can't tell you."

"Well, whisper it, then;" and as she said this she bent her head towards him.

Who could blame him for kissing the fair cheek of the listener as he softly whispered,—

"You."

Certainly Ethel Lanyon would have given him what she herself would describe as "a piece of her mind" if her sudden leap to her feet had not nearly cost her her life, and involved him in the same destruction.

She had forgotten for the moment where she was seated; forgotten that on that side nearly three hundred feet below them the cruel black rocks were fixed like Death's gigantic fangs churning the green water into angry foam, and seeming, to the girl's terrified imagination—as she saw and realized her awful peril—as though they were gnashing with wild delight at the near prospect of her awful death. And she must have fallen if Theo had not caught her in his arms and held her.

For five awful seconds the couple, tightly clasping each other, hung balancing and shuddering on the utmost brink of the frightful

precipice. Then the man's strength prevailed, and, with the girl in his arms, he threw himself backwards, and they were safe.

Both of them were deadly pale, and Ethel gasped faintly,—

"I was nearly gone that time."

"Yes we were both of us as nearly gone as we are ever likely to be without going altogether," said Theo, gravely. "And we may tempt fate once too often, so I think I shall be careful where I go in future, especially with you."

"I—I was so surprised," pouted Ethel; "and you took a kiss from me."

"Well, shall I give it you back again?" asked Theo, gravely.

She looked at him for a moment; then she laughed and blushed; and perhaps it was from the fear of putting her life and his in danger a second time that she offered no resistance when, in the most conscientious manner possible, Theo Martindale restored the kiss which had very nearly cost two lives.

It is not to be supposed that a proceeding of this kind could take place on the summit of a lofty and quite isolated pile of rocks without being seen by somebody.

And just as Theo with no little self-complacency had accomplished his second kiss, he observed to his infinite confusion that no less than four double-barrelled glasses were levelled at himself and his companion.

The first two spectators were not of much consequence, being only the German Count and Madame Myer, who were laughing, but the others, alas! were Admiral Lanyon and Miss Martindale.

Theo wisely refrained from telling Ethel of his disagreeable discovery, but deliberately levelled his own glass at the last-named couple, who at once resumed their walk, Miss Martindale looking extremely shocked, and the admiral savage to the last degree.

One thing was evident, however—neither of the spectators suspected the peril he and Ethel had so narrowly escaped.

When their friends were well a-head the young couple continued their walk to Lizard Town, being careful not to join the rest of the party; and thus it happened that before any questions could be asked by Admiral Lanyon, Theo Martindale was prepared with a highly satisfactory explanation.

CHAPTER X.

THE WIDOW'S LAST CARD.

SIR ORIEL GRAYSTOCK and Kate Killigrew had strolled along for a short time in silence.

They were careful not too follow too closely in the footsteps of Mrs. Lanyon and Max Von Rubenstein, though they were obliged to go in the same direction.

Still, Sir Oriel did not quite know how to begin what he had to say; and it was not until they had reached a quiet nook where they were sheltered from observation that he suggested to his cousin that they should sit down for a minute or two and enjoy the view.

Kate acquiesced demurely enough. She had a suspicion of what was passing in her cousin's mind, but, with the usual perversity of her sex, she would not under any consideration have uttered one word to help him over his difficulty, and she now sat patiently waiting until he should find courage and words wherewith to begin.

When he did speak, however, his words startled her a little, for he said,—

"You were once engaged to Mr. Von Rubenstein, I believe."

"How do you know?" she asked quickly.

"His sister told me so, not more than half an hour ago."

"Did she tell you anything else?" inquired Kate, with subdued anger.

"Yes; she told me it was probable that the engagement would be renewed. Is that true, Kate?"

"No, if there were not another man in the

world I would not marry Max von Rubenstein," replied Kate, passionately.

"There are plenty of men in the world, Kate; but there is one man for whom there is no woman under Heaven like you," said Sir Oriel tenderly. "Is there any possibility of his love being returned?"

Kate Killigrew did not withdraw the hand which her cousin had taken in his own, but she said, in quiet, earnest tones.

"Is not this love very sudden? Do you realise that it is scarcely a week since we first met."

"No, it seems to me as though I had known you for years," he said eagerly. "And, though in point of time counted by days and hours, the feeling may seem of sudden growth, it will live in my heart as long as I live."

Kate made no answer; her own heart seemed to echo the words he had uttered; and when, grown bold with her seeming acquiescence, he ventured to clasp her in his arms, and call her his own, she did not repulse him.

"We won't go in for a long engagement, Kate," Sir Oriel said, when they began to discuss matters. "Shall we be married next week?"

"Next year, you mean," she laughed.

"Indeed I don't, I mean what I say," he responded.

"No; next week is impossible," she replied. "It might with superhuman efforts be next month."

"Then next month let it be; but I hear voices—one kiss, my darling. And now, tell me, shall I announce our engagement at once, and send these foreigners flying?"

"No, pray don't do anything of the kind," replied Kate; "wait a day or two, at any rate; you can trust me, Oriel, can't you?"

"With my life and with all that I hold dear," he replied, fervently.

Kate smiled, but she could not reply, for the voice of Bertha von Rubenstein exclaimed, "Ah! there you are, Katie; it is getting so late that the word is passed to hurry on to Lizard Town as fast as possible, and Miss Martindale has kindly invited us to return to Falmouth in your carriage. We came with the ordinary excursionists."

"We can accommodate you and Madame Myer," replied Kate, "but I doubt if there is room for the gentlemen."

"Oh, they can crush in somewhere; the more the merrier," laughed Bertha, who seemed to have recovered her good temper.

Kate made no reply; she knew that her aunt must have been almost asked for the invitation before she gave it.

When the party came together at Lizard Town they found tea ready, and more than one or two of them were surprised to observe the change that had come over Mrs. Lanyon.

One could scarcely have called it a frown that had settled upon her face, for the expression had altogether changed; while her features during the last hour seemed to have perceptibly hardened.

No one really took much notice of her, however, and it was not until tea was almost over that old Miss Martindale remarked to Ethel,

"If you were of age and had anything to leave, my dear, I should recommend you to make your will before going to Kynance Cove again; you might not always select so safe a spot as Asparagus Island for an adventure."

"What an idea!" laughed Ethel; "have you made your will, Miss Martindale?"

"Of course, I have, my dear."

"And have you made yours, Miss Killigrew?" continued Ethel with her usual recklessness.

"Yes," was the reply; "I made it directly I came of age; but I mean to alter it with as little delay as possible."

"A marriage upsets a will," remarked Max Von Rubenstein slowly.

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten," said Kate hastily. And then she drooped her eyes, fearing she had betrayed herself, while Mrs. Lanyon, on the one hand, and Max and his sister on the other, drew in consequence of her blushes conclusions very far wide of the truth.

Kate's remark about her will had put Mrs. Lanyon in mind of a circumstance that had previously escaped her memory.

When Kate came of age, shortly after her great uncle died, the uncompromising enemy of her branch of the family was believed to be Sir Oriel Graystock, who, not satisfied with his own portion of old David Killigrew's wealth, was trying to get possession of a small estate that adjoined Graystock Manor, and which had been left to Kate.

She had in consequence made a will, which excluded him altogether from the succession to any property over which she had a power of appointment.

There were various bequests to friends and distant relatives, including a legacy of twenty thousand pounds to her "dear friend, Emily Lanyon"; but what especially troubled our heroine at the present moment was that bitter animosity towards her cousin, Sir Oriel, was the prevailing tone of the document, and Kate Killigrew resolved to destroy it that very night.

"I should not like him to know that I had ever thought so ungenerously of him as that will implies," she mused, thoughtfully.

Mrs. Lanyon's thoughts, however, had taken a much darker channel.

Her conversation with Max von Rubinstein had been to the last degree unsatisfactory.

Of course he had not been frank enough to say that he had ceased to love her, but he had told her very plainly that he could not marry her or any other woman who did not possess money, and at last he went so far as to admit that he had quite made up his mind to marry Kate Killigrew.

He, however, had not scrupled to declare that he infinitely preferred his companion, and if she were only possessed of one third of Kate's wealth he would gladly marry her.

This declaration had taken complete possession of Mrs. Lanyon's imagination, and her vanity was far too strong to allow her for one single moment to doubt its truth.

The widow became more moody and thoughtful than ever after Kate's remark about altering her will.

"This night," she kept muttering to herself; "this very night; or else it will be too late."

The drive home was uneventful except that Ethel Lanyon managed to ride on the box-seat; and her mother, complaining of a headache, squeezed herself into a corner, closed her eyes, and scarcely spoke the whole of the journey.

When they reached the Grove she went straight to her own room, and she did not reappear until the beating of the gong announced that dinner was on the table.

To her surprise, however, the Von Rubensteins and Madame Myer still remained though the Count had pleaded a previous engagement, and had gone to his hotel.

Dinner passed off as usual, but when the ladies retired to the drawing room Kate Killigrew quietly slipped away to her own apartment, leaving her aunt and Mrs. Lanyon to entertain the guests.

For ever since her will had been spoken of a feeling almost akin to terror had taken possession of her mind lest Sir Oriel should see it and be pained at the tone in which he had been spoken of, and should discover how every possible precaution had been taken to prevent him from touching a sixpence that she could leave to any one else.

So, having locked herself in, she opened a little iron safe which she kept in her dressing-room, and taking the now objectionable document from its hiding place she deliberately tore it into dozens of small pieces.

She could not easily burn these pieces, however, so she put them in her pocket, meaning to throw them into the kitchen fire before she retired for the night.

When she returned to the drawing-room she found all the party assembled there, and Mrs. Lanyon was sitting at a remote table pouring out tea, while Max Von Rubinstein sat close by talking to her.

The widow saw Kate enter the room, and she began to pour out a cup of tea for her,

talking so volubly and nervously to Max all the time that he began to suspect mischief, though, of course, he could not guess what was really going to happen. He emptied his own cup, however, and placed it by the side of the one which the widow was just about to fill for herself, she having already poured out that intended for Kate.

For a moment he turned his head away, but only for a moment, and then—could it be fancy—was he awake and in his right mind—or did he really see the woman deliberately empty the contents of a tiny blue glass phial into the tea intended for the heiress!

The very thought seemed to make his blood stand still.

He made no sign, however; the several cups received their due proportion of cream and sugar; and then Mrs. Lanyon turned to him with a singular smile, and said:

"You may have the pleasure of giving Kate her tea, Max."

He rose with alacrity, while a slight but well-understood signal to his sister brought her at once to the widow's side just as the latter was about to hand him a cup of tea.

A glance told Bertha that she was required to distract the widow's attention for a moment, and she did so to such good purpose that Max contrived to take the cup intended by Mrs. Lanyon for herself, while he dexterously pushed the drugged one—if drugged it were—into its place.

Then he carried the cup to Kate, and remained for a few seconds talking to her and Sir Oriel, until by what seemed a sheer piece of clumsiness, he completely knocked the cup and saucer out of the young lady's hand.

"How dreadfully clumsy of me," he exclaimed, in a tone of extreme self-reproach. "Pray let me get you some more."

But Kate declined, saying, "I really do not care about tea to-night, thank you."

Then she took her handkerchief out of her pocket to wipe away some drops of tea that had fallen upon her dress, when a whole shower of pieces of paper fell upon the carpet.

For a moment Kate looked at the shreds of paper in dismay; then seeing the troubled expression on Sir Oriel's face, she laughed brightly as she said,—

"There goes my will; it was made under a false impression, and I had forgotten its existence until this afternoon, so I determined before I slept to-night to destroy it."

Max von Rubenstein went back to the tea-table and told Mrs. Lanyon what had happened.

"And she did not drink any of the tea?" she asked, faintly.

"No," was the curt reply.

"And what was all that paper thrown about for?"

"She had been tearing up the will, and pulled the pieces out of her pocket with her handkerchief."

Mrs. Lanyon rose from her seat—she felt faint and giddy, with the crushing sense of defeat; for with the destruction of that will was annihilated her last hope of becoming the wife of Max von Rubenstein.

"Good bye, Max," she said, in a low hoarse voice. "My heart is crushed—I shall go away to-morrow; we shall never meet again. May she make you as happy as I would have done."

And she was turning to leave the room when he put his hand upon her arm, and said, in a low warning tone:

"Kate did not drink the drugged tea, but you did."

"I!"

For one minute she remained silent, as though his words had suddenly turned her to stone; then with a wild shriek she threw up her arms, crying, "I am a dead woman. I am a dead woman."

In a moment she was surrounded by her wonder-stricken friends, who vainly demanded the cause of her agitation; but they could learn nothing from her beyond her reiteration that she was a dead woman.

"Send for a doctor, and tell him to bring all necessary appliances with him to save a lady who has swallowed some poisonous stuff by accident," said Max, promptly.

Then he turned to Kate and suggested that the servants should take Mrs. Lanyon to her own room; and, despite her shrieks of fear rather than of pain, this was quickly accomplished.

As soon as the ladies had left the room Max von Rubenstein briefly narrated what he had seen and done.

"I dare say you thought me very stupid when I upset your cousin's tea," he said, turning to Sir Oriel. "But I did it on purpose, because I was not quite so sure as I should have liked to be that it was safe."

"And is it true that the wretched woman has swallowed her own poison," asked the baronet, with horror.

"I think it more than probable—at any rate, she believes she has," was the reply.

The doctor arrived at this minute, and though the whole truth was not told him he was left to infer that Mrs. Lanyon had taken poison without intent to do herself injury, and a small bottle which had fallen from the wretched woman's bosom in her agitation was handed to him.

He looked grave when he had examined it, but he and his assistant set to work, and before the morning dawned Mrs. Lanyon was pronounced to be out of danger.

But the Grove was no longer a fitting home for her; and though Kate and Ethel never quite knew the nature of the crime meditated, neither of them expressed either grief or surprise when they heard that she had gone away, leaving no message and no address behind.

The morning after Mrs. Lanyon's departure Max von Rubenstein presented himself at the Grove, and formally proposed to Kate Killigrew.

It is almost needless to add that he was quite as formally refused; and that when he began to talk of blighted affections and of future hope, he was quietly told that on a certain day within a month Kate Killigrew would become Lady Graystock.

Then he went away wrathful with himself and with his friends for having let so rich a prize escape him.

What became of Mrs. Lanyon was never definitely known; the admiral was always very reticent upon the subject, and when in due time he gave his granddaughter in marriage to Theo Martindale, he particularly warned that young man to keep Ethel away from her mother.

But long before this event occurred Sir Oriel's wooing had come to a blissful termination. Not a cloud dimmed the summer sky on the morning that the young baronet stood before the altar in Mylor church with his blushing bride.

It was a very quiet wedding, with Ethel for bridesmaid, and Ralph Fernor for the bridegroom's best man, while Theo Martindale, as her nearest male relative, gave the bride away.

So deeply interested were all of the wedding party in the drama in which they were the actors that they failed to notice a tall, fair, handsome-looking man—a foreigner beyond doubt—who stood just inside the church door while the marriage ceremony proceeded.

When it had ended he bowed his head and walked away—a sadder and a wiser man.

[THE END.]

NATIONAL PECULIARITIES OF WOMEN.—The national peculiarities of women were summed up recently by a French journalist as follows: The English ladies ride on horseback, the American flirts, the French woman studies her toilet, the German plunges deeply into the mysteries of cookery and philosophy, the Spaniard dances and uses her fan adroitly, the Italian loves with a rosary on her arm and a billet-doux in her bosom, but it is reserved for the fair Russian to be a politician.

THE BROOK!

Little brook! Little brook!
You have such a happy look—
Such a very merry manner, as you sverve and
curve and crook,
And your ripples, one and one,
Reach each other's hands and run
Like laughing little children in the sun.

Little brook, sing to me;
Sing about a bumblebee
That stumbled from a lily bell and grumbled
mumbly, mumbly,
Because he wet the film
Of his wings, and had to swim,
While the water flies raced round and
laughed at him!

Little brook—sing a song
Of a leaf that sailed along
Down the golden braided centre of your current
swift and strong,
And a dragon-fly that lit
On the tilting rim of it,
And rode away and wasn't scared a bit.

And sing—how oft in glee
Came a truant boy like me
Who loved to lean and listen to your lilting
melody,
Till the gurgle and refrain
Of your music in his brain
Wrought a happiness as keen to him as
pain.

Little brook—laugh and leap—
Do not let the dreamer weep;
Sing him all the songs of Summer till he sinks
in softest sleep;
And then sing soft and low
Through his dreams of long ago—
Sing back to him the rest he used to know!
SOPHIE.

SWEET INISFAIL.

A ROMANCE.

By the Author of "The Mystery of Killard," &c.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FOUL PLAY.

THE game went on under the directions of Tim.

The boy explained to his master each point as it arose, and told him where and when his play had been defective.

Isaacs won.

"Did I win fair?" said he.

"Yes," answered Tim, "quite fair."

"Look at me straight in the eyes, you cruel omadawn, and tell me did you cheat me, or did I cheat you?"

"I did not cheat you, sir, what would I have for cheating you? And you didn't cheat me because you don't know how."

"That's bad, Tim. It would never do in this world not to know how to cheat—not that any man ought to cheat; of course; but a fellow must be on his guard against people who have no consciences. Tim, suppose you had my cards, and I had yours in that game, could you win?"

"Yes, sir. The cards you held would win if you riddled them through a gridiron."

"Now Tim, I gave you a shilling for showing me how to play fair; now I'll give you a whole half-crown for showing me how to play foul."

"There's many a way," said the boy. "If you're playing with a man that doesn't watch the game very close, you can renege."

"What's that, Tim?" said the dwarf.

"Not to follow suit; not to play the same kind of card as the other man leads."

"And what other way can you cheat, Tim?"

"By working the ace of hearts down to the bottom of the pack, and when you are quite sure it is the last card, getting the pack out,

and slipping the ace of hearts into your own hand. The ace of hearts is the only card that's always trumps."

"Tim, it's wonderful; and you're quite wonderful too. You'll be a bishop, or a lord chancellor or a sergeant in the police, one of these days. But at present remember you're not worth more of any man's money that had to get it out of you again, than half a crown a month. And what other way, Tim, could you cheat?"

"By bulking the cards."

"Aye," said the dwarf. "How's that done?"

"When it's your deal and you are taking up the cards to shuffle them, you put all the cards of one suit together and then get the pack cut, so that when you help yourself to the last three, you give yourself three of the suit, and turn a trump of the same kind. In that way you are sure of three trumps out of five, and have as good a chance as anyone else of the two other cards."

"Tim, I wouldn't be surprised if you came to be Lord Mayor, and be rotted with coaches and horses and servants, and all sorts of grandeur and style and fashion. Now, look here, Tim, I've given you a shilling for showing me how to play fair and half a crown for showing me how to cheat; put down the three and sixpence there and I'll put a whole sovereign against, and we'll play for the money, and you'll cheat me so as to win the game."

The boy's eyes glistened. He was to have one pound three and sixpence for half-an-hour's instruction in the game. This was the first act of generosity his master had ever shown him, and it affected him almost to tears. He shuffled the cards, and they proceeded with the game.

Tim won by twenty-five to fifteen.

The dwarf stretched out his hand, took up all the money, and put it in his pocket, saying, "You earned the shilling fair and the half-crown fair, and then you got me to put down a sovereign against your miserable three and sixpence, and then, before my very eyes—before the eyes of your good, kind, dear master—you try to cheat me out of my money. Go away, sir. Go away at once. Only I'm the kind-hearted man I am I'll get you arrested for fraud and tresson-felony and misprison and trover, and very nearly anything else I liked. Go away, you unfortunate boy. I'm going away for three days. I don't want the office to be open and your wages eating me out of house and home. Don't think I'll give you that eight shillings or the shilling a month I promised you. A private viper, that a man brought up himself, and then went and forged his name on valuable securities, and got the money, and cleared out for parts unknown, couldn't be a more venomous she-tiger than you. Go now, and remember when I come back to have the two fire-grates polished and the ink bottles full, or I'll melt down your gristle and make caviare of it to the general; and, believe me, that when the general comes to hear of what you've done he'll just order out a corporal's guard and have you shot, and afterwards buried by court-martial."

The boy dashed out of the office, out of the front door, and into the street.

Isaacs gathered up the cards carefully, restored them to the paper in which they had been originally packed, and dropped the parcel into his pocket. Then having looked at his watch he said, "I haven't a minute to spare." He opened the safe behind him, took out a bundle of notes, and thrust it into his pocket, locked the front door as he went out, drove to King's Bridge, and took a return ticket for Clonmore.

As he got into the train he tapped the pocket in which he had placed the notes, and then the one containing the cards, and said to himself:

"Dear Edward Pryce will be delighted to have a game with me, now that he has got a little money."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"A PACK OF CARDS!"

MR. JOSEPH ISAACS put up at the South Tipperary Hotel, in Clonmore. He was in a

most unwonted humour, for extravagance or display. He did not, like an ordinary mortal, content himself with a simple bedroom, and the right of the coffee-room or commercial room. He engaged a private sitting room, and there being but one in the house, and that the drawing-room fronting the street, he had to pay no less than a guinea a day for the use of it, and attendance.

When it came to be known in the neighbourhood of the hotel that a gentleman had taken the large drawing-room, and that the gentleman was not of average stature or mould, public opinion as represented by the domestic servants and stablemen of the posting establishment attached to the hotel was divided into two camps. One of these held that the stranger had taken the drawing-room for the purpose of concealing his bodily infirmities. The other section believed he was a candidate for the parliamentary honours of the borough, and that presently an announcement would appear to the effect that the stranger would address the free and independent electors of Clonmore from the balcony running along the drawing-room windows; and that although the people were quite contented with the sitting member, it would not hurt the town if the stranger made a few speeches, and spent a little of his money, before he found out the hopelessness of what he had undertaken.

But although Mr. Isaacs had gone to the expense of a private sitting room he displayed no other sign of extravagance. He ordered a chop, potatoes, bread and a small bottle of Bass for his dinner. His evening meal consisted of the common eighteen-penny tea of the hotel.

He did not go out the day of his arrival, but spent his time in solitary grandeur in the drawing-room. That night he wrote a note which ran as follows:—

"Dear Manton,—

"I have run away from Dublin for a few days rest. Come and see me to-morrow evening at the South Tipperary. I'll give you a cup of tea, and we can have a chat.

"Your ever sincere friend,

"JOSEPH ISAACS."

This letter he addressed on the outside to Mr. Edward Pryce, Telegraph Office, Clonmore. When he had directed the envelope he gave it to the boots, and asked him to post it at once. Then he went to bed.

Next day he did not leave the hotel, either. He amused himself by looking out of the window, and playing the game of twenty-five, his right hand against his left—taking care, however, that no servant should surprise him in the act.

With the evening came Frederick Manton. He sent up his name as Edward Pryce, and was shown immediately into the drawing-room. The meeting on Manton's part was not a pleasant one. He looked with his restless eyes for a moment at the dwarf, and then turned them away again impatiently.

"Well," he said, abruptly; "what's the matter now, Isaacs? I thought we had cleared off that old score. I hope you are not up to any tricks now."

"Bless my soul," said the dwarf. "What put such a thing in your head? I am sure you did not mean what you said. Tricks! To think that my old friend, Frederick Manton—"

"Hush!" said Manton, turning rapidly round. "There's some one at the door."

"So there is. So there is," said Isaacs, genially. "I told them to bring the tea the minute you came. A most excellent hotel this is. You could not be better served if you were spending a thousand a day in Dublin."

As on the previous evening the tea was the ordinary eighteen-penny one of the house. While the meal was going on the dwarf kept the conversation moving, Manton contributing no more than a monosyllable now and then. The latter knew very well that Isaacs had some particular object in coming to Clonmore, and sending for him. He was almost as sure of this as of daylight at noon, and he had more

than a suspicion that the object for which Isaac wanted him was one not likely to be beneficial to him—Manton.

As soon as tea was over, and the servant had withdrawn, Manton pushed his chair back from the table, and fixing his furtive eyes once more upon the dwarf, said, "Now then for business."

"Business! I pledge you my word, Manton, there was nothing in all the world farther from my mind than business when I wrote you that note. I haven't a thought of business now. I have left my business behind me in Dublin. I am out for a holiday now; and I thought that as I happened to be here, and you were the only man in the town I knew, I'd ask you to come and spend an evening sociably with me."

"How is it you happen to be in Clonmore?" asked Manton, suspiciously.

"Well," said the dwarf, dropping his chin into his hand, and looking straight into the eyes of the other; "You see I had a very pleasant and profitable transaction with your brother George. I have every reason for liking your family. I always liked you, but George is a regular tip-topper. I tell you what it is, if George and you only pulled together, you two could do what you liked."

"Aye," said Manton bitterly. "If we pulled together and let you pull from both of us I daresay you would think it a very good arrangement. Come on. Out with it whatever it is. Let me know at once what you want me to do."

"I swear to you," said the dwarf, vehemently, "I did not send for you on business. I have no business to propose to you. Will you not take my word for it?"

Manton frowned and looked uneasily at the dwarf. "Very well. Let us forget business."

"With all my heart," said Isaac. "Let us have a pleasant evening. What do you say to a drink and cigars?"

"I am quite willing," said Manton, with an air of relief. "After that we can go out and have a walk."

"Walk be—" said Isaac; "I have not such a figure that I care to show it off before strangers. What else can we do to pass the time?"

"Do you play billiards?" asked Manton. "There is a billiard room in the town."

"No, I don't play billiards."

"In that case," said Manton, "I don't know what to suggest. Of an ordinary evening I always either walk or play billiards. I don't know any other way of passing the time."

"That's a dismal look out," said the dwarf, taking his chin out of his hand, and looking ruefully round the room. "Anyway, here's the drink and the cigars to start us."

At that moment the waiter entered and placed the glasses and decanters and cigars on the table.

When the two were once more alone, the dwarf got up and began walking about the room as if in search of something. At last he opened an old fashioned Japanese tea-caddy. He uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

"What have you found?" said Manton, who had lit a cigar and drunk some of his punch, and begun to feel at his ease.

"A pack of cards," said the money-lender.

Manton started to his feet. "A pack of cards! Where?"

"In this old tea canister."

Manton approached the side table on which the caddy stood, and watched Isaac as he drew the cards out of it. When the cards had been removed, Manton leaned over the table and looked into the caddy. "There is nothing else here," he whispered.

"No," answered the dwarf with a laugh. "But one pack is enough for two, eh?"

Manton drew back from the caddy as though it were an infernal machine, which his breath might cause to explode.

"My dear Manton, what is the matter?"

"Aye, one pack may be enough for two, as you say, Isaac. When did you put that pack there?"

"I!" laughed the other. "I never saw the cards before."

Manton frowned again, and keeping those eyes which seldom rested fixed on the face of the dwarf, and bending forward and downward, said in a low voice, but with enormous emphasis,—

"It is false."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A GAME OF CARDS.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the dwarf, looking steadfastly into the eyes of the other. "Bless my soul! You don't mean to say you think I'm not speaking the truth."

"I don't think about it at all. I know."

"Bless my soul, what eloquence! You ought to be in Parliament, Manton. You ought to be in Parliament, indeed. You are a natural orator. To think of the way you rattle out your words is enough to take the breath away. What is that you were saying?"

"I say you are a low, mean, cowardly wretch," said Manton, white and shaking with passion.

"So you did; so you did. It's a great pity there's no one here but me to hear your eloquence. Now if there was a nice jovial round-faced, red-faced, head-constable sitting there, how he'd enjoy this treat."

Manton drew his brows down tighter over his eyes than ever. "What do you mean?" he whispered, through pale lips drawn back from his white teeth. "What do you mean, you misshapen beast?"

"Misshapen; I know I am, Manton, and I don't mind a friend like you calling me what you did in a pleasant way, and just to pass the time. But I shouldn't like, even a friend like you, to call me other ill names. Bless my soul! I should be in an awful rage if you called me a few things I could name."

"What are these," whispered Manton hoarsely.

"Suppose," said the dwarf, smiling and rubbing his hands softly together, "you called me a forger or a perjurer, I should be very wild."

"Suppose," whispered Manton in the lowest tone yet, "I took you by the throat and the ankles and dropped you over that balcony, head foremost, on the flags below?"

"Then," said the dwarf, with genial vivacity, "I should be killed and you would be hanged, and that is an end of one, two, and three. Heigh-ho, says Rolly? There would only be two of us, you know, if we do not take into account poor O'Gorman."

Manton looked round swiftly. Yes, all was right. They were alone. No head-constable was behind them or at their side, or leering from behind some piece of furniture or curtain. Once more he looked rapidly round. No; there was no weapon within reach, nothing but the simple tables and chairs, and ornaments of a hotel drawing-room. If the dwarf was to be made away with there was nothing for it but to throw him out through the window or strangle him where he sat. But then immediate detection would follow.

Manton threw back his head, flung up his arms into the air, wheeled swiftly round from the dwarf, and walked to the other end of the room.

"Do not tempt me! do not tempt me beyond my strength. It is bad enough for us to live on earth together, you and I. Let us not help one another to live elsewhere together." He dropped his arms and leant against the wall as though exhausted by some prodigious physical effort.

The dwarf looked at him, still with a bland smile on his face, still rubbing his hands softly together. "Come over, Manton," he said; "Come over and finish your liquor. Do not give way to such theatrical goings on. What have you done with your cigar. Come over and light another."

Manton walked unsteadily across the floor, resumed the seat he had previously occupied, and finished what remained in his tumbler at one gulp. When he put down his tumbler he

said, "Come, let us not be all night over it. You want to play. Bring the cards."

Isaac fetched the cards from the side table, came over and sat down in his place once more. He began shuffling the cards.

"What shall we play," said Manton.

"Twenty-five," answered the dwarf.

"We don't play that game in England," said Manton, "but I've learned it since I came over."

"I am sure you play it better than I," said Isaac, "for I learned it only the day before yesterday from Tim, my office-boy."

"What!" exclaimed Manton, as he made himself another glass of punch. "Do you mean to tell me, a man of your age, doesn't know the national game of cards?"

"I assure you," said the dwarf, "I never played one single game of any kind until the day before yesterday."

Manton could not understand this. He had thought when the dwarf produced the cards that it was with the object of winning money of him. Now he changed his mind and adopted the belief that Isaac merely wanted to pass time, as he had said. "What shall we play for?" he asked. "A penny, sixpence, a shilling a game?"

"Pooh," said the dwarf. "It is not worth while. Cut. Make it a sovereign to begin with."

Manton looked keenly at the dwarf. "I can't make you out, Isaac."

"Never mind," said the dwarf. "Make it a sovereign, instead."

"Very good," said Manton as he led.

Manton won. "Will you play double or quits?" said he.

"What's that?" said the dwarf.

"That you give me two pounds if you lose, and I give you back your own pound, and one of mine if I lose."

"Capital! That's splendid. Let's play double or quits."

This time Isaac played a non-trump to a trump card, revoking to his disadvantage, and losing the trick. He had a stronger hand than Manton the first deal, notwithstanding which, by this revoke, he made but ten to Manton's fifteen.

When Isaac revoked to his disadvantage Manton dropped his eyelids, and looked up at him. The dwarf's eyes were bent upon his hand. Manton looked down again, thinking, "If he is fool enough to play with me, when he knows no better, that is his affair, not mine."

The next deal Isaac had again a stronger hand than Manton, yet the latter took the first and second tricks, and so the game.

"Shall we double again?" said Manton, in high good-humour.

"Oh, yes," said the dwarf, "I could go on playing this exciting game all the night."

Again they played. Again the telegraph clerk won.

Six other games were won in succession by Manton. He was in the highest of good humour. He could scarcely conceal his triumph. During these games Isaac had revoked more than once, always to his own disadvantage. Although Manton himself had done nothing actively unfair, he had not protested against the revoking of the other. At last, when the dwarf seemed to be excited beyond the control of reason, and the stakes were two hundred and fifty-six pounds a side, Manton said, "Don't you think we are running too high?"

"What!" cried the dwarf. "Do you think I am not a good mark for two hundred and fifty-six pounds? Do you think I cannot pay if I lose? Come, I'll put down the money on the table. I have lost to you two hundred and fifty-five pounds."

He thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out a pocket-book. "Come," he said, "there are your brothers, nine hundred pounds in that. Have it all back if you have the pluck. Put you down two hundred and fifty against it, and I'll show you what Joseph Isaac is made of."

"I have not got two hundred and fifty

pounds," said Manton, trembling with mingled chagrin and eagerness. "But I'll lay you all I have—two hundred and five, to your two hundred and five, added to my winners. That will make it about even. Are you on?" The old passion was now blazing once more in Manton, and he was almost beyond his own control.

"Done!" cried the dwarf, striking the table and making the glasses ring.

The cards were shuffled, Manton being the dealer. In the first deal Manton made fifteen to the dwarf's ten. One of the tricks won by Manton had been taken by the ace of hearts. In putting the cards together Isaacs deliberately placed the ace of hearts at the bottom of the pack, and so shuffled the cards as to keep it there, but this so clumsily that Manton could not help seeing it. In dealing the cards the dwarf, when giving himself the final three, took two from the top of the pack and the ace of hearts from the bottom, and placed these three with his other two cards.

"What are you doing?" said Manton, in amazement.

"Never mind," said Isaacs. "If you have any objection state it now, and we'll settle after the game is played out."

"I object," said Manton, almost speechless with astonishment, "to your slipping the ace of hearts from the bottom of the pack into your own hand."

"Very good," said the dwarf impatiently. "Let us finish the game, and then settle the point you have raised."

They took up the cards and played. Each was twenty before Isaacs played the ace of hearts. With it he won the trick and the game.

"I claim the money," said Manton, doggedly.

"On what grounds?" asked the dwarf, with a smile.

"On the grounds of foul play. You put the ace of hearts from the bottom of the pack into your own hand."

"I did," said the dwarf, severely.

"That was cheating, and the money is therefore mine," said Manton.

"But look here, my dear friend. When I cheated before, and reneged my higher trumps to your lower ones, you never objected or accused me of foul play. Why should you do so now?"

"Because," said Manton, "you want to cheat me out of my money."

"Look here," said Isaacs, "Don't let us get into words, and quarrel over the affair. Let us part friends whatever we do. [What's money compared to friendship. I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll refer the whole of the matter to your friend the head-constable who represented the police at the inquest, and to whom you told all you knew about poor O'Gorman, and to whom you might like, perhaps, then to tell all I know about you. Now, won't that be a nice way of ending it?"

Manton stood up from the table without uttering a word, and walked out of the room, leaving all the money on the table. He bounded down the stairs, and as he reached the bottom rushed violently into the arms of a man ascending. Each man looked into the face of the other for a moment. They were brothers. Frederick Manton was on his way to his lodgings to do, he knew not what, but something desperate. George Manton had come up to town to transact some important business for his old friend, Michael Fitzgerald.

(To be continued.)

A HAPPY HOME.—Six things are requisite to create "a happy home." Integrity must be the architect and tidiness the upholsterer. It must be warmed by affection and lighted up with cheerfulness, and industry must be the ventilator, renewing the atmosphere and bringing in fresh salubrity day by day; while over all, as a protecting glory and canopy, nothing will suffice except the glory of Heaven.

TO THE WORLD GUILTY.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRANGE PROMISE.

HYACINTH had a key to Lenore's stable, and as she could not only saddle and bridle her horse herself, but mount without assistance, she was perfectly independent of stablemen and grooms, as became a campaigner.

No one was stirring when Mdlle. Independence made her appearance in the stable-yard, and Lenore whinnied softly as the door of her box was opened; for she knew she was going to have a morning scamper.

"Yes, you are going out, heart's dearest," said Hyacinth, tenderly, as she quickly caparisoned her favourite. "But not quite so far as we went the other day, and you will have to exercise your patience this morning, my Lenore."

But Lenore, happily unconscious of a *rendezvous*, rubbed her nose caressingly against her mistress's shoulder, and pawed the ground expectantly, and presently trotted out with tossing mane and flashing eyes into the bright sunshine.

Then Hyacinth gave her the rein, and Lenore flew swiftly over the springy turf, and in a few moments the Dingle was before her. Not a soul in sight—

"—Not a sound,

But a bird singing—singing in the skies,
And the soft wind that ran along the ground."

And Hyacinth's eyes were glowing and her heart beating fast, as she rode on to the Dingle.

She slackened to a walking pace as she passed under the trees, and suddenly drew rein, for there was a quick step, and Lochisla stood before her.

"My love, my Hyacinth!" he said, as he lifted her from her horse; and holding her to his breast he kissed the beautiful flushed face tenderly. "It seems so long since I saw thee, darling, and yet it is only a little more than a week."

"It has seemed long to me, too," said the girl, wistfully; "but I could not come before, Count Errol."

"I know it, dear one; but"—with his grave, sweet smile—"not 'Count' Errol."

"It is the old habit," she said, colouring a little, "and I have an affection for it too; so you will forgive me if I fall into it sometimes."

"I will forgive it always, Hyacinth, if it please you best; and now tell me, are you still happy?"

"Yes; and see Lenore—is she not a beauty?"

"A beauty indeed," said Lochisla, caressing the gentle animal, who, as all living creatures did, made friends with him at once. "I noticed her yesterday."

"Louis bought her for me," said Hyacinth. "Listen. We are going to London, in a week or ten days. You start! Would you not come too? You would not stay here?"

"Stay here? No, no; but go to London, re-enter that world that knew me dishonoured! Can I do it?" He bowed his head in bitter suffering. "And yet," he added, almost in a whisper, "yet for thy sake, my heart, it must be!"

"For my sake!" repeated the girl, clinging closer to him. "Why for my sake—if it give you pain?"

"You cannot understand—you do not know; but indeed, it must be as I say. For other reasons, too, I must brave the ordeal."

But even his lips had grown white, and Hyacinth, in deep distress, yet scarce knew how to meet a resolve based upon reasons of which she was ignorant. The thought that if Lochisla entered that world—which would only too readily receive him—he would be nearer to herself, could not for an instant weigh in the girl's lofty mind against her sympathy with his bitter repugnance to the trial. Not only would his suffering have been hers, even had she failed to fully comprehend it; but in this

case, as he felt, so, in like circumstances, would she have felt.

Society would receive him for his fame, his wealth, his rank; his brilliant qualities of mind and person; but the offence it laid on him would not be forgotten; and to a nature like Cameron's, what can compensate for the loss of honour! "All is lost—save honour," said Francis I.; but if honour be lost, the whole world is gained in vain.

"Hyacinth," said the Earl, presently, "you have trusted me so fully—you will trust me still? Ah, yes, I do not doubt; forgive the question. But it will seem strange to you—as indeed to many, and they will condemn me—why not?—that I should appear in the London world once more—that world in which I might, perchance, meet Gwendolen Stanhope; in which now I have no right; but you will trust me—you will believe—"

"Oh, Errol—you do not doubt," the girl interrupted, passionately. "You pain me! I judge you! I even, for one fleeting moment, lose my faith in you? If you may seem to be wrong, I know you cannot be in fact."

Lochisla laid his hand on the white brow, and looked down into the glowing eyes that did not shrink now from his gaze.

"Verily," he said, in a low voice, "there is no love passing the love of woman."

The violet eyes filled with tears—half sad, half happy, and the fair face was hidden on his breast. Lochisla was silent for many moments. Perhaps, just now, he was trying once more to pierce the black future, asking again the inevitable question, what he was to do with this wondrous life given into his charge—all his own now—a trust for which he was responsible to God and his own conscience; not sought, yet committed to him, and he had no power to repudiate it. Fate it was that had woven the thread of Hyacinth Vernon's life with his own; fate that forbade him to seek the only refuge of a hopeless love—exile. Still this girl's love was his. Whether sought or not, he had won it. Her life—her happiness—were in his keeping, as surely as his clasp enfolded her. What must the end be?

Suddenly the girl started and looked up. "Count Errol, I must be going, I must not be late."

"Going! so soon? but, perhaps, it is not so soon after all. Love is a bad reckoner of time, my Hyacinth. Yet before we part—for I feel we shall not meet again till both are in London—there are a few words I must speak. You say you are still happy; you are keeping back nothing? I mean, are you happy still with Gwendolen—you understand me, Hyacinth?"

"Yes, she does not think, Errol, that," the bright head drooped, "that I love you, save as I did long ago. I do not know whether she believes you love me. They all knew I met you that day, but they said nothing. Gwendolen is not changed to me."

"But she knows you regard me as a friend, at least?"

"Yes. She has not so spoken as to force me to any expression of opinion. The other day Louis said something against you—he was trying to discover what I really thought of you—and I told him we had best not talk of you, as we did not agree, and we might quarrel!"

Lochisla started. "You answered so? Child, listen to me—alas! that I must needs ask so much from your faith. Will you act as I shall ask, not questioning why?"

"Yes."

"You thought it a hard thing, Hyacinth, to seem to doubt me, if questioned. It would be a harder thing to act that part unquestioned."

"Errol!" with a quick breath that was almost a sob, "must I do that?"

"For my sake, Hyacinth, for my sake, I entreat, I implore you to do me this seeming wrong," said the Earl, with an intense earnestness that filled her with wonder, as he held her the closer to him. "It may seem a strange thing to ask of you; but I know that you trust me fully."

"But, Errol, Errol, you do not want me to seem to hate—despise you? to part from you—not to see you?"

"No, no, Heaven forbid! My darling! that were cruel, indeed; and I dare not think I could keep a resolve to be as a stranger to you. But hate, despise—well—well, not these perhaps, but perplexity, doubt—even more. Hyacinth, you have promised?"

"Yes, I have promised," the girl half whispered; "I will obey you."

"Heart's dearest! ah! if I dared spare thee this pain!" He stooped and pressed his lips to her brow as he spoke those strange words, and it was two or three minutes before all his unusual powers of self-control gained the mastery and enabled him to speak calmly. Then he said, softly and steadily—

"Your name, Hyacinth, must not, in the great world, or in the world of your home, be linked with mine. To your subtle wit I can trust—young as you are—to act out the drama; but you must seem to grow colder towards me, as time goes on—to marvel, startled and wondering, when I appear in society; at length to bear to me the attitude of one who cannot wholly break with the past, yet who has almost ceased to feel a living friendship. From me hold somewhat aloof, yet not so much as to compel me to recognize that you are quite alienated from me. But to Louis and Gwendolen convey the impression that while you cannot feel free to blot out the past, it is a sense of gratitude and no deeper feeling that binds you; that the wrong done to Gwendolen, aggravated by a shameless disregard of good-feeling and carelessness of just censure, cannot be overlooked. Will you—can you do this, Hyacinth?"

The girl had trembled while he spoke, and laid her head on his breast, as if in mute appeal against the hard task he imposed; but now she lifted her face to his, and crushing back, with the strong effort of a strong nature, all thought of self, said clearly and resolutely—

"I said I would obey you, Errol, and I will. Whatever you wish I will do."

The Earl would have spoken—would have answered her, but

"The accents unuttered died on his lips,"

and he could only press those lips on hers, and in silence the agonized prayer went up from his heart, "O Thou to whose soul the sword has pierced, give me the power to bless this perfect love—to reward this cloudless faith!"

Then he gently released Hyacinth, and, still silent, led her to her horse, and lifted her to the saddle, but as he put the reins in her hand his own closed over it in a passionate clasp.

"We shall meet again soon, heart's dearest," he said, "very soon, and so a brief adieu."

And Hyacinth rode out from the waning shadows into the sunlight. But, alas! the shadows lay dark and heavy in the future, and seemed to cover the whole horizon. Would her lover's prayer ever be answered? Would she pass out at last from the deep gloom into the sunshine again?

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE.

"Sir Louis and Miss Stanhope, Miss Philippa Stanhope, and Miss Hyacinth Vernon have arrived at Grosvenor-street for the season," said a fashionable morning paper of a day in the end of May; and one portion of that announcement excited a considerable amount of attention in the *beau monde*. Hyacinth Vernon was "Count Cameron's Hyacinth," and society promised itself a new sensation, the more piquant if "Count Cameron" should come back to the world so long deserted. On this point information was eagerly sought, but no certainty could be arrived at. The Earl had gone to Paris, and his intentions with regard to London remained unknown to the curious.

With regard to Hyacinth Vernon, however,

more news was forthcoming. It was discovered—with marvellous celerity—that she was the possessor of a snug little fortune, a fact easily ascertained by a simple reference to Somerset House; and it was stated, very positively, that she was remarkably beautiful. How this came to be known was a mystery, since at the time the assertion was going the round of the clubs—within three days of the Stanhopes' arrival in town—Miss Vernon had not even appeared on the Row, and had not shown to the visitors who had up to this time called in Grosvenor-street; but doubtless the reports of newspaper correspondents in the German War aided the imagination, which always connects the idea of personal beauty with romantic circumstances, to conjure up a picture of unusual attractiveness in the *protégée* of the famous—in some respects too famous—Count Cameron, the great leader, who seemed to unite in himself the most opposing qualities—the capacity for the noblest and the basest deeds, the most punctilious honour and the most cynical disregard of the laws of honour.

Of the celebrity which awaited her, Hyacinth was as yet ignorant. True, Gwendolen and Louis had both told her that she would certainly be "made much of" in society, in consequence of her connection with Lord Lochisla, and her own beauty; but though she shrank from the linking of her name with Errol Cameron's, she was too much accustomed to be "starred" to trouble her head about the matter, and thought that her cousins exaggerated; and that in London, five years after the war, people would not accord her any special notice because she was with Colonel Cameron in the German camp.

She wanted to go out, to see the park; to ride, to see the opera, the theatres. But Louis was not well at first; he often had attacks of weakness, and was obliged to lie down a good deal, and Hyacinth stayed by him, for Gwendolen and Miss Philippa were busy paying and receiving visits. And so it was some days before Hyacinth saw more of London than the opposite side of Grosvenor-street.

But one morning at breakfast, Louis said he was much better, and when the meal was over he went and sat in an arm-chair instead of lying down, as hitherto.

"I am so glad you are better," said Hyacinth, going to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder.

He looked up, smiling.

"I know you are, dear; but you have been making me terribly selfish. To-day you must leave me to my own devices, and you must go out with Aunt Philippa and Gwendolen."

"No, Louis, please let me stay with you; and let me read to you, will you?"

"Will I! As if to hear you read were a penance instead of a pleasure; but I won't have you stay with me."

"Yes, you will, Louis; and after luncheon, if you are much better, you will take me out with you."

So Louis yielded; and very happy he and his cousin were that morning together—Hyacinth reading for awhile, and then playing to him, and singing some of her German songs, and filling up the intervals with talking about a hundred things. For Gwendolen and Miss Philippa were busy most of the morning arranging preliminaries, invitations, &c., for a dance to be given in Grosvenor-street next week, in which Hyacinth had no part or lot. "Not balls or dances, so soon after my father's death," she had said; "another month at least—if not longer."

"I wish it had been a music party, Hyacinth," Louis said to-day, a little before luncheon; "then you would be present."

"I should not mind that; but I shall make myself very happy while you people are dancing."

"I shall not be so happy; I shall want to slip away and come and sit with you."

"That would not do, cousin mine. Here is Aunt Philippa; I hear her step outside."

The door opened; Louis and Hyacinth were sitting in the library just now, he in an arm-

chair, she on a table; but she slipped off as the lady entered, and went and stood behind Louis's chair, leaning on the back.

Miss Philippa was in walking attire. She had been to post some letters with her own hand for the sake of a "constitutional," and Hyacinth's keen eyes saw at once that something unusual had happened. Miss Philippa had heard something unpleasant—very unpleasant. Hyacinth could guess what it was.

"I have just been round the square," the lady began, glancing at the girl; "and I met Herbert Hazlemere, Louis."

"Hazlemere!" exclaimed young Stanhope. "I did not know he was in town!"

"He has only just returned from Paris. He told me what I was more indignant than surprised to hear."

"What was it that he told you?" asked Louis.

"Lord Lochisla is in London!" replied Miss Philippa, shortly, and seated herself defiantly, looking from Louis to Hyacinth.

But Louis had started violently.

"Lochisla in London!" he exclaimed. "Has the man no shame?"

Hyacinth had flushed deeply, and her head drooped. Her heart was beating heavily. For the first time had come an opportunity of fulfilling her promise to the Earl, and she must not neglect it. Hitherto, from the time of her last parting with him, his name had not been mentioned, but now she could speak—now she could sow the first seed of the harvest her cousins were to reap.

"Shame!" rejoined Miss Philippa, "I scarcely think he has acted lately as if he had. I suppose you would find some defence for him, Hyacinth?"

"I?" The girl shook her head, biting her quivering lip. "No," she added, slowly, "I do not defend him. I cannot understand it—perhaps he is passing through."

"Passing through? with chambers in Pall Mall? Mr. Hazlemere said he had arrived early yesterday morning—and Hazlemere himself was told at one of the clubs that Lochisla was lodging in Pall Mall."

"In the centre of fashionable London," said Louis; "he intends, then, to re-enter the *beau monde*. How, I wonder, will it receive him?"

"How?" said Miss Philippa, with bitter force as she rose, "with open arms! What does society ask for? Even less than Lochisla has. He can more than satisfy all demands. It cares nothing for that which he does not possess—honour, virtue, good faith. Women with daughters in the market will persecute him; he will be regarded as the best part of the season, and may marry whom he will, doubtless!"

"Aunt Philippa," said Louis, quickly, "no more now, here."

"Hyacinth herself," said Miss Philippa, more calmly, "does not defend him."

"He may," the girl said, thus appealed to, and speaking with an apparent effort, admirably assumed, "have some motive which I cannot fathom, for being in London. But it seems strange. I thought he would have been too proud to go into society."

Louis was silent; he reproached himself for the throbbing of something like pleasure that he felt on hearing Hyacinth's words—the result, evidently, of no sudden shock. The girl must have thought much of late over the incident that had banished Errol Cameron from England, and over his recent conduct; and gradually her mind was emancipating itself from the mist of romance that hung around the great German leader, and she was learning to recognise the bitter truth that the gold of the image she had worshipped was not gold at all, but only gilding laid thickly over an image of clay. For such a man there might still be the feeling of gratitude; but Louis thought that love, where there could not be perfect trust—true reverence—would be foreign to Hyacinth's nature.

"I, too," he said, gently, "should have imagined he would be too proud to enter a

world that even while it receives him must condemn him; but it seems not, and then—

"And then," added Miss Philippa, as he paused, "he might have remembered that Gwendolen moves in this world."

She opened the door as she spoke, and quitted the room.

Hyacinth came round to her cousin's side and then stopped. He looked up to her, and took her hand.

"Hyacinth dear, I am so grieved for you."

"I know it, I know it," she interrupted, hurriedly; "but Louis, he saved my life—he was kind to me."

"Dear cousin, I don't want you to be ungrateful; but I think you exaggerate Lochisla's claim on you. He saved your life! True—but could a soldier—could any man with one spark of feeling—any man who was not coward and ruffian, do less? And kind and gentle to you! Who could be otherwise? I don't say that the Earl is heartless; far from it. I think there is not a weak or pale line in his character. It is only that the evil predominates. Still your own feelings are your own concern. Are you not free? I think," now he smiled, "that you are hardly the young lady to endure even the mildest coercion, or attempt at it."

"No, I should not; you are very good to me, Louis."

"Am I? I thought it was the other way."

"That is only another proof of your goodness," said Hyacinth, speaking more lightly, and trying to cast a load off her mind; and Louis shook his head, and laughed a little.

"I won't try for the last word, Hyacinth; but suppose we agree to drop controversy, and this afternoon we will go in the Row for a little, and what do you say to 'Lohengrin' in the evening?"

"Oh, Louis! that would be Paradise; but you are not strong enough—you will tire yourself."

"No; a ride will freshen me up, and to see your pleasure in the opera will be better than the opera itself."

The luncheon-bell put an end to further conversation. Gwendolen was lunching with a friend, and Hyacinth was glad just now that she was out of the way. Miss Philippa was grimly silent during most of the time; but one or two attempts to talk about Lochisla were turned off by Louis; and Hyacinth thanked him by a look that more than repaid him. She little knew how looks, and words, and acts, which meant nothing but the affection of sister to brother, would one day recoil on her. If Louis had been of a different temperament her eyes would have been opened; but as it was, she had not, at present, any idea that he thought of her otherwise than as she thought of him. She loved her gentle cousin, and loved him the more—as strong and tender natures ever do—because he lacked her own bright health; but if she had been heart free, the character of her love would never have been other than it was now. It would be a bitter moment for her when she came to learn that she had been misunderstood, and even credited with recklessly or wilfully misleading. But Hyacinth was scarcely more than on the threshold of life, and she had many a harsh lesson to learn yet—not the least harsh being the inability of most men and women to even comprehend the existence of currents in human nature which do not flow in their own lives.

CHAPTER XV.

WELCOME FAME AND WEALTH.

ERROL, Count Cameron and Earl of Lochisla, came to London almost as a stranger. Though, perhaps, six men at the least out of ten who should pass him in St. James's-street or Piccadilly would know who he was, not one in ten would know him personally. His sojourn in the London *beau monde* had, after all, been brief, and it was eleven years ago. Brought up in his boyhood a great deal abroad, he had therefore formed no school-boy friendships in

England. He had been at Oxford for nearly two years, but then his vacations were passed in travelling, and he had been but a short time in the army; and, familiar with Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and other great Continental cities, had been scarcely more than introduced into the London world, when the blow fell that drove him from it—as he then believed—for ever.

Eleven years brings about many changes. Of those who had known the dashing young chief of Lochisla some were dead, some abroad; one was at Ghorncliffe, another at Dover; yet a third in Ireland; and none of these had been more than comrades. Men like Lochisla are slow to make friendships, and usually attract affection more easily than they give it.

But the paramount motive that had brought Lochisla to London could not obliterate the suffering the step cost him—suffering made more poignant from the inevitable concomitant circumstances. Society would link his name with Hyacinth Vernon's; would believe that for her sake the Earl of Lochisla had braved everything—braved the thousand tongues that would ask why he had so disregarded respect for the woman he had slighted and abandoned, to whom his presence in the society wherein she moved was an insult. Yet it must be faced—met—all—from which the proud, high-souled man shrink with ineffable dread—with anguish that seemed at times almost more than he could endure.

And who should know the fierce temptation that gripped that man's passionate heart? Who should know how the tempter came to him almost, as it seemed, in tangible shape, urging him to wrong? "Why drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs?" said a voice in the night-watches—and in solitary hours, too, by day. "She trusts you—she has perfect faith—to her there is no shame, no dishonour. Think how she loves you. How cruel for her will be long years of separation; nay, think what you owe to her. Make her your own; abroad, Cameron's name is honoured—reverenced. Who will say, in the Fatherland his sword has served so well, that he wrongs the woman to whom he gives that name?"

But if the battle was fierce, and oft-renewed, the tempter was ever vanquished. Yet Errol Cameron knew too well the strength of his own passions not to dread its power, the more that it appealed not only to those passions, but to honour also—the honour that compelled him to regard Hyacinth's happiness; and there might come a time when on that issue he would have to face the contest and choose which of two paths of honour that led opposite ways he was most bound to follow—a difficult choice, since the one condemned him to disgrace—to separation from the woman he loved; the other, ah! from that future he shrank, and prayed passionately that so terrible a struggle might never be forced upon him.

It was early—not yet eight o'clock—and Lord Lochisla sat in one of the handsome suite of apartments he occupied in Pall Mall, not in dressing-gown and slippers, but in morning costume, and instead of lounging he was writing letters. His habits were those of a soldier, not of an exquisite; and however few the hours of rest he was always up early, a stranger to indolence and luxury in his personal tastes and practice, though in his surroundings he indulged a critical taste that amounted to a passion for all forms and ideas of beauty.

The Earl had just pushed aside the sixth letter he had written that morning—the third of his arrival in London—when, after a preliminary knock, the door opened, and Ian Mac Ian entered, bearing a dozen letters, which he laid before his master and foster-brother.

"I told you how it would be," he said, with the privileged familiarity of that tie which is to a Highlander perhaps even more binding than the tie of blood. "You don't seek the n, Lochisla, but they seek you."

"Seek me!" repeated Lochisla, quickly turning over the letters. "I did not know," with some irony, "that I had so many friends."

"Aye, then, you have," said Mac Ian, coolly, "and so it ought to be. And none from our Hyacinth?"

"How should there be, foolish Ian, when she does not know my address? I have not written to her. I shall let her know in some other way were it to send to me. Who is this from? I should know the writing, though I have not seen it for more than ten years. Ah! young Lancing—he was young then, at least."

"Dear Lochisla," began this letter, dated from Dover, "I was as delighted as amazed to see in the papers that you were in London; and a friend wrote to me that you were in Pall Mall." After many expressions of warm friendship, the writer added, "I shall be in town next week; drop a line and tell me I may call on you."

The Earl's dark cheek flushed slightly. He tossed the letter to Mac Ian without comment, and opened another from Lord Belmont, who had been in Lochisla's regiment, and had sold out since. He dated from the Army and Navy Club; and, writing in most friendly strains, declared his intention of calling on his "old comrade," unless he heard from him to the contrary. A third was from a civilian—famous on the turf—a man with more heart than judgment, and who had roundly maintained, in slap-dash fashion, since the Franco-German War, that whether Lochisla had been to blame about "that Stanhope affair" or not, he had more than redeemed himself during the war, and he, for one, was ready to shake hands with him whenever he saw him. A fourth was from a lady, high in the social scale—a middle-aged lady, who had two handsome unmarried daughters—who had been in the schoolroom when the young Highland chief danced in Lady Loring's *salon* in Park-lane. My lady began her epistle, "Dear Lord Lochisla," and trusted that the Earl would call upon her and renew an acquaintance the cessation of which she had always regretted.

With a half laugh, Errol Cameron gave that letter, too, to Mac Ian, and Mac Ian smiled grimly; then he looked up.

"She has a motive, of course?" he said; "but what do you intend to do, Lochisla?"

"To do?" said the Earl. "I came to London to be in society—what can I do but accept the hands held out to me? I could not seek these people—could not ask them to blot out the past; but if they forget dishonour in fame, or care little for either where there is wealth and rank, I cannot remind them now that I should have no part or lot with them; that they ought to condemn where they express friendship; to cast out where they welcome. No! the end is won. I will write to Lancing to come; I will not deny Belmont; I will call on Lady Loring, and pay due homage to her and to her daughters. Joseph Maria!" he said, rising, and speaking with bitter emphasis, "what sin must a man commit to banish him from society if he have what the world worships?"

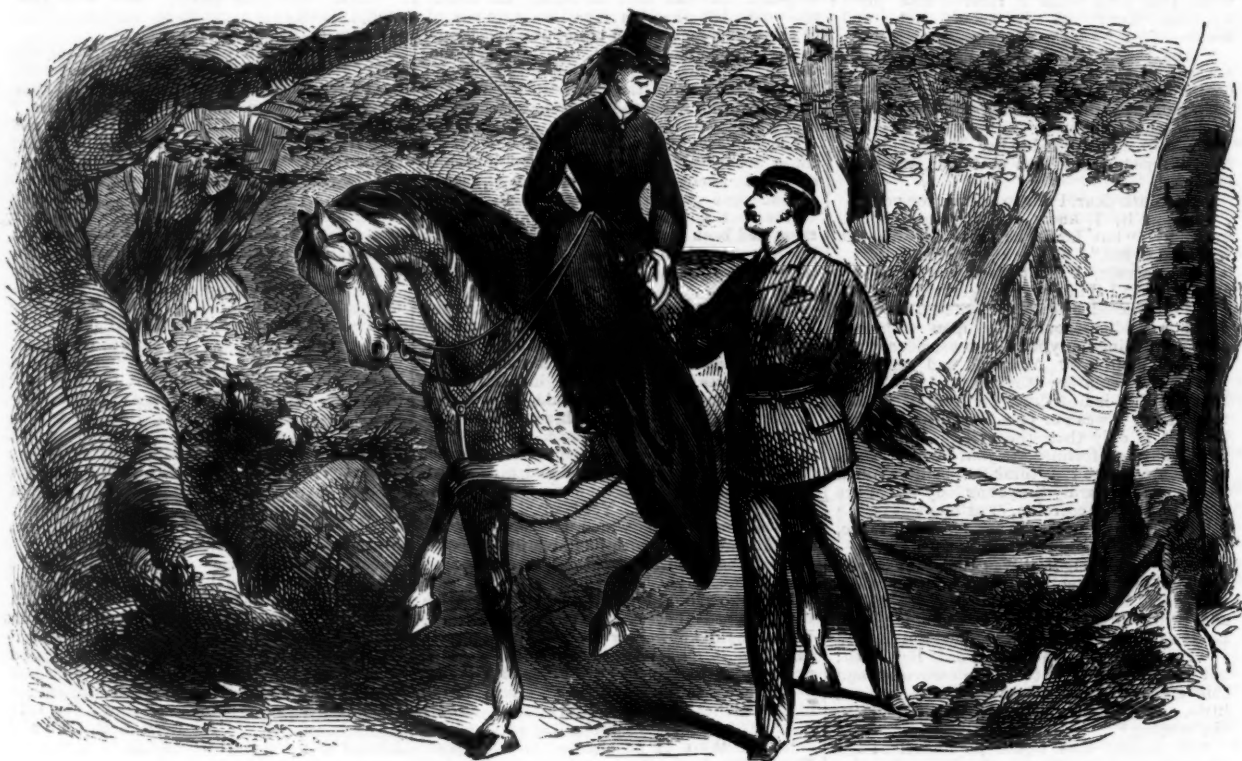
"There is only one sin, I think, will do that," said Mac Ian, "and that is murder, which, if it be found out, gives society no chance to forgive the murderer."

"True, Ian; and then he would be excused, and pitied, and perhaps exalted to martyrdom. But so be it. Success is the hall-mark, and it suits me well that it should be so."

He walked once or twice through the room, with a quick, impatient step; then he came back to the table, and drawing writing-paper to him wrote rapidly.

"See that this letter," he said, presently, handing one to Mac Ian, "is left during the morning at the Army and Navy Club; this one is for post; and this—Lady Loring's invitation—I shall answer in person, to-morrow. Belmont, doubtless, will call to-day. Stay, Ian, go this afternoon to the Row, between five and seven. Very likely Hyacinth will ride there; if she does, she will turn aside to speak to you; then, if you can, give her my address."

Ian Mac Ian had all his wits about him. His face lighted like a sunbeam at the prospect of seeing "our Hyacinth" again, and



[WEAVING THE WEB.]

he nodded, smiling, "It will go hard," he said, "if our Hyacinth is there, that I do not give her the message." And Ian took his departure.

It was about five o'clock that evening that the Highlander ushered into the apartment a fashionably-attired, good-looking man of forty, whose card announced him to be Lord Belmont. Lochisla was in an adjoining sitting-room, and for a few moments Lord Belmont was alone.

He glanced round the apartment, and smiled approvingly.

"By Jove," soliloquized he, "our fire-eating Colonel of Uhlans has not forgotten the tastes of his youth. Where the deuce did he get that superb bronze? Stole it, I wonder, in the war? But no, he and his men never plundered."

He went up to the group for a nearer inspection, but a light step behind him made him start round—to stand face to face with Cameron of Lochisla.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "by Jove!" His lordship was not eloquent, and grasped warmly in both his own the right hand which, he afterwards remembered, the Earl had not offered.

"I should have known you anywhere, Lochisla, though you're so much changed—in some things; but handsome fellows like you don't alter as we ordinary individuals do. By Heaven, man, I'm right glad to see you again among us."

"You are kind to say so—to feel so," said the Earl, touched, despite himself, by the unmistakable cordiality of his old companion in arms, "for I am bound to accept your welcome as sincere."

"That, indeed, you are—for it is meant so. Why not? Nay, Lochisla, let us date from Mons—the war of '70, you know."

The Earl started, and the pallor of his face deepened suddenly, till his very lips were bloodless; but quickly recovering himself he said, with a slight and somewhat haughty smile,—

"Pardon—if you can be so generous, I thank you; but I cannot make my memory dance to my wishes."

"Well, well," said Lord Belmont, bluntly, "by-gones are by-gones to me anyhow; so let us have a chat, and hear and tell the news. I suppose," he added, seating himself; "you've heard what a sensation 'Our Hyacinth' has been making on the Row?"

"No—I have not heard; I have seen hardly anyone yet."

"Oh, by Jove! everyone's talking about her."

"Of course she will be presented?"

"Doubtless, but I cannot tell you."

It struck Lord Belmont that the Earl said these words a little coldly, as if he either did not care to talk much about Hyacinth or desired to repel the assumption that he was acquainted with all that concerned her. So my lord passed on to something else.

"I should like," he said, presently, "to introduce Hazlemere to you. Do you chance to know the name?"

"No; I am a stranger in London, you see you must enlighten me. He is not known in Paris, or I should have heard of him."

"Of course you would. No; he is a London man, and very well known—a capital fellow. I met him in Piccadilly yesterday, and," said Lord Belmont, laughing, "he was raving about 'our Hyacinth'—he's a great friend of the Loring, you know."

"I know now," returned Lochisla, smiling. "I have just had a note from Lady Loring, wishing me to call on her, so I may very likely meet Hazlemere there."

Belmont laughed.

"Dangerous woman, that Lady Loring. Two daughters still on hand. She has been trying to get Hazlemere, but he won't bite."

"Really! The Loring girls were in the schoolroom when I knew them. I speak of Emma and Clarice. There was one married—Mrs. Sandon. I saw her photograph in two or three windows yesterday. She poses as a 'society beauty,' I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. Very handsome, isn't she? and very fast? She's mad after private theatricals, but she gives jolly garden parties; they've got a place on the Thames. She's certain to drop on you, Lochisla, so soon as she returns to town. She's in Germany just now."

"I shall be honoured," said the Earl, with a slight touch of sarcasm in his tone; adding, as Belmont rose, "Dine with me at seven, if you are disengaged, and come with me to the Lyceum. I want to see Irving. I hear so much of the man, and have never seen him."

"Delighted!" returned Lord Belmont. "Seven, sharp. Then, *au revoir*. I shall just have time to dress."

And his lordship departed.

That night it went like wildfire through the crowded audience at the Lyceum that the very dark and strikingly handsome man in a private box with a friend was the famous Colonel Cameron, Earl of Lochisla; and lorgnettes innumerable were forthwith levelled at the box in question, while not a few curious eyes sought for the fair face of Gwendolen Stanhope. But Gwendolen was not in the theatre to-night; and Lochisla never once blanched under "the fierce white light" of merciless scrutiny. What he endured he but knew; little cared he for the gaze of cultured or vulgar; he had lived all his life in the blaze of publicity; but venomous tongues were busy with his name to-night, and he was passing through the bitter waters of "the proud world's contumely."

But it was for her sake—for Hyacinth's; and while his heart burned like living fire within him, he still whispered, "For thee, my soul, my life—for thee, I can endure, and will endure to the uttermost."

What peril threatened Hyacinth Vernon? For no light cause—for no fanciful reason—would the proud Earl of Lochisla have faced the society whose canons he had outraged. What if the sacrifice were all in vain?

(To be continued.)



[THE DANGEROUS REBEL IN DANGER.]

NOVELETTE.]

A DANGEROUS REBEL.

CHAPTER I.

"CLARE AUBREY."

"CLARE, my dear, will you listen to reason and sense?"

"I look like it, mother mine! I hate reason and sense and all that sort of thing, you know, dear."

Mamma looked despairing. What is to be done with a wild colt, who tosses its pretty head at the first sight of the halter, and prances off round the field far beyond all reach? How was it possible to be angry with this wicked, witching, perverse beauty of seventeen—tall and slender as a sapling, supple and graceful as a young panther, and far more dangerous to hearts—male, at any rate—as many, perhaps, had found in this her first season.

"My dear," said Lady Aubrey, severely, after a pause, "you are quite old enough to understand the necessity of our position; if either Mary or you had been a son instead of daughter everything would have been very different, but you are girls and not boys, and your poor father died too suddenly and early to make any proper provision for us. The property being entailed on heirs male must, with the baronetcy, go to your uncle Hubert, who has certainly, I must say, acted most handsomely. As long as I live he will continue the liberal allowance he makes me, and as he dowered Mary on her marriage so he will you with £5,000; but, of course, he expects, as I do, that you, too, will marry well."

"I quite see." With a swift, lithe movement the young lady transferred herself to the head of the couch against which she had been leaning, with a slight fling back of the prettiest, curliest of black heads that had a world of expression in the action. "And if I don't marry well, what awful consequence will follow?"

"Dependence on your uncle after my death,

child," returned the elder lady, vexed at the unmanageableness of her beautiful daughter.

"Would I, indeed! Not I, mother, while I have a pair of hands and a brain in my head. Mary's married well enough, surely, to please you and Uncle Hubert, without bothering poor me."

Mamma looked at the rebellious beauty, and, despite her vexation, could hardly forbear smiling. Knowing her beauty, theoretically, the girl was practically as unconscious of her real power as a panther whose playful paw may kill a man without the least intention of inflicting even a scratch.

"My dear Clare, there is every possible difference in the two cases. Mary is pretty, but nothing more, and she was two-and-twenty before she recovered that horrid sprain enough to go into society, and when she and Major Ormond fell in love I was perfectly satisfied with the match for her; but you are quite different—quite different! With such beauty and attraction as yours you can command a coronet, though that I do not care about especially; good blood and position and wealth are the essentials."

"So they are, madre; a simple rule of three sum, isn't it?" said saucy ironical Miss Clare, working it out in the air. "As good blood (*that's* right enough) is to position, so is wealth to—ahem! the unknown quantity to be found, if possible, is a wee bit of heart."

"Nonsense, my dear; all that will come in due time. Pray don't get any romantic absurdity of that sort into your head, for it is the ruin of a good settlement in life."

"I haven't a bit of romantic absurdity about my seventeen years, dear, I assure you. The nineteenth century personified I wouldn't go in for; romantic poverty or love in a cottage not for anything; I should be miserable. I'm used to wealth and all that, and have no wish to leave it in the lurch. I have no especial objection, *per se*, to wealth, or even to the article attached to it, called husband; but—don't look so alarmed, you dearest of mam-

mies!—but I decidedly object and decline to be marked up for sale like a handsome colt. As to the creature at or for whom all this talk of yours and Uncle Hubert's is aimed at poor me—"

"And whom," put in mamma, very coolly; "you have not even met yet, my love, though you will soon, and therefore you cannot, with any shadow of fairness, take up a prejudice against him. Vernon Westcliffe is not only well born and wealthy—the heir to one of the most splendid properties amongst the untitled nobility—but he is young, very handsome, brilliantly talented, and everybody's favourite."

"Exactly," supplemented Miss Curly-head, with all the defiant wisdom of seventeen years. "I heard enough about the creature yesterday at the Featherstones to sicken me. They were all raving about him. Just come back from the Continent; he is just a conceited ape; thoroughly petted and spoiled from his cradle by parents, servants, and everybody else; adored and run after by the girls, till I daresay he thinks he has only to hold up a finger to any one and have her without the asking; as if all men weren't vain enough without all that."

Mamma smiled serenely.

"Your experience is so very long, my dear," she said, not showing her secret alarm at the prejudice of her wilful daughter. "I daresay, by-the-bye, that the abused men say the same of Miss Clare Aubrey."

"I have not the least doubt they do," returned the young lady, perfectly undaunted; "but they can't say I run after the best *parti* amongst them, for I snub them awfully. The beauty of this season, am I, forsooth!" said the madcap, indignantly. "I didn't ask anybody to stick me on such a stupid pinnacle; and I'm not going to be a season's toy to anybody."

"I daresay, my dear, that Vernon Westcliffe will not trouble you with any especial notice."

"So much the better! I hope he won't,"

answered Clare, with genuine sincerity. "I detest those spoiled fellows who think they are all-powerful and irresistibly fascinating."

"He'll think you so, I daresay," thought the mother, looking complacently at the exquisite beauty of the face and form before her; but aloud she only said, "Go and dress for your ride, you goose, and don't talk nonsense about him until you at least see him."

Clare pirouetted out of the room, leaving her matchmaking maternal relative somewhat anxious about her schemes. There was no saying what Mademoiselle might or might not do. Still, if only handsome, fascinating Vernon Westcliffe would fall in love with her, mamma did not think he would be very likely to give up. He was little used to "No" from anyone, she knew—this only and idolized son; and he would hardly begin a meek acceptance of rebuffs from such a—doubtless—unexpected quarter as the lips of the girl to whom he should bow his crest.

The very hostile attitude and determined defiance of her self-willed daughter at the very first notes of warning had, however, made the clever mother keep a diplomatic silence on two other facts which she might, perhaps, have divulged. The first was that Sir Hubert Aubrey and Mr. Westcliffe, *sen.*, were great friends, and had a great wish, and, indeed, intention, of uniting the son of the one and niece of the latter; secondly, the fact that young Vernon Westcliffe, who had chosen to come over from the Continent in the middle of the season, only a few days before this, had by chance seen the wilful beauty (unseen by her), and had expressed to Sir Hubert his dutiful readiness to fall into his father's wishes regarding the young lady.

So far so good; but Sir Hubert's satisfaction received a heavy damper, not to say blow, a few hours later when his sister-in-law called in, and, in reply to his views, communicated hers.

What was to be done with the beautiful rebel?

"Such a dangerous rebel, too, by Jove!" said the old soldier, laughing; "for she's shot the young fellow to the heart at the first go off; but he wouldn't be his father's son to lightly give up the girl he had taken a fancy to; and I'm too old a campaigner to be easily frightened by such a youthful enemy. All's fair in love and war, you know, Florence—ha! ha! ha! And if, as you say, the wilful monkey will not even give him the fair unprejudiced chance to take the citadel by ordinary fair warfare—"

"I am certain of that, Hubert, I know her so well. She would run off with someone else just to show—"

"Well, my dear," concluded Uncle Hubert, "then, as I was about to say, the citadel must be besieged by undermining, and for that purpose we must first reconnoitre the position. The dangerous rebel does not as yet know Westcliffe from Adam, does she?"

"No; she hasn't met him."

"Ah! and as she is only out this season, and he only just come, no one has talked to her much about him or his people yet. They don't come to town yet, you see, as the squire hates London, and the girl's aren't out yet, though older than Clare."

"Clare does not know anything about his people," said Lady Aubrey, "or what relatives he has or has not—only that he is an only son, and of course—quite spoiled."

"Ah, ah!" cried out the old soldier clapping his hands. "Then by Jove, my dear, I think I have it! a glorious idea, but I must speak to the boy himself first to mature it. It will want a lot of coadjutors in it and time."

"My dear, Hubert, what can you possibly have thought of?"

"I'll call in on you this evening, Florence, and tell you," returned the baronet, oracularly. "I must see Vernon at once before it's too late. Meanwhile, for goodness sake, take care that Clare does not see him anywhere, or we are done. Where is she going to-night?"

"To Lady Di Heatherly's dance," answered Lady Aubrey.

"That will do first-rate. I'll take care V. W. doesn't go; you give me a lift in your carriage as far as the Bijou, and I'll drop on the boy in time; he is likely to be there now."

And chuckling like a delighted school-boy over his idea the baronet led her out to the carriage, and the pair of conspirators drove off together towards the select Bijou Club.

Mr. Vernon Westcliffe was there, and was speedily closeted in a private room with his father's friend for a solid hour. And when they parted the proceedings of the barum-scarum young scamp were certainly very singular indeed; for instead of dining like a Christian, and going to Lady Di's ball to there meet his *diva*, he went straight to his chambers, and held a long confab with his "man," a faithful and confidential attendant who had been with him for years—valet, courier, and no doubt the confidant of many an escapade, not perhaps quite so orthodox as the present.

After this confab he sent off a note of apology to Lady Di. A telegram had just summoned him home to Westcliffe Park on pressing family matters, which excuse—when it presently came round to Miss Clare's ears—caused that knowing young spray of nineteenth century society to laugh to herself, and mutter: "Bah; family humbug—got into some wild scrape, and become scarce till it is blown over;" in which opinion, however, Miss Clare, for once, at any rate, maligned Mr. Vernon Westcliffe's morals—as while she danced and flirted gaily he and his man William were rattling away down the Great Western Railway *en chemin* for Westcliffe Park, there arriving about ten o'clock to the astonishment of all.

Whatever the "family matters" were their discussion went on, with an odd mixture of gravity and laughter, seriousness and mischief.

The result, however, was satisfactory; a letter was indited by the Squire to Sir Hubert, and with it the heir and William returned to town, reaching in time to pack baggage and go off to the Continent again that night—an extraordinary thing certainly for this favourite of fashion to do in the middle of the season.

"Perhaps," says wicked, saucy Clare, shrugging her shoulders, "the favourite danseuse has snubbed him too openly for the last new marquis, and he's off in a huff."

Oh, knowing, wicked Clare. "Huff," indeed! Perhaps she would be a little wiser in a few weeks' time."

CHAPTER II.

"SUCH VERY ODD PROCEEDINGS."

SOMEHOW or other it got about at the clubs and five o'clocks that Vernon Westcliffe had only been a bird of passage from the beginning, and had never, after all, intended to be more than a few days in England till later in the year, when he had several autumn country invitations to fulfil. These on *dits* had—rare thing—the ring of authority, though certainly, nobody could or did trace them to Sir Hubert Aubrey; they flew about for a few days and then, of course, in the interest of things present, the absent was forgotten.

Clare knew very well that the battle had only blown over for a time; but she was a citizen of the world, and deemed it plenty of time to meet the contest when it came—reserving her forces till they were actually needed. So did mamma. She said no more about Vernon Westcliffe, except to remark one day to her daughter that she wondered whether "the Mr. Westcliffe whom her own former school friend, Gertrude Poynter, had married" was any relation of these Westcliffes.

"I don't know, I'm sure mother, mine—may be; I suppose he has relations," returned the young lady, "but I don't remember you ever mentioning a schoolfellow of that name."

"No? I think you must have done so, my dear. Gertrude Poynter—oh, yes, a nice little thing—my junior. I lost sight of her a good deal as one does, but she sent me cards

when she married. I'll ask your uncle Hubert."

Which she did the next time she met him, Clare being with her.

"Well, my dear," said he, good-naturedly, "I dare say they are some relations; I think I've heard Squire Westcliffe speak of some second cousin of his—a widower with one child, if I remember rightly—who married again; but I'll write and inquire of him if you like."

"Thanks, Hubert, how kind. I should really like to meet Gertrude Poynter again."

"I'll write then. What are you and bonny Clare," patting the girl's shoulder, "going to do this autumn?"

Clare laughed.

"Oh, mother spent such a lot on my wardrobe for me to catch that rich *parti* that she says—"

"Clare, be quiet," interrupted Lady Aubrey. "My dear Hubert, I have an invitation; but unless Clare gets one too we shall go to some quiet watering-place for a month."

They parted. But a few days later at breakfast came a note from the baronet to say that he had last night had a letter from his friend; that he had cousins of the same name, one of whom had married a lady of the name mentioned, and, "added the squire, "as he was just writing to his cousin, he had taken the liberty of mentioning Lady Aubrey to her former schoolfellow."

"Very kind of Mr. Westcliffe, I'm sure," commented her ladyship, glancing keenly but covertly at her daughter's beautiful face. "Where are you off to now, my love?"

"To practice, dear," said the rebel, gaily, declining to give any word of praise to the squire just because he was the father of the objectionable Vernon. "Then Uncle Hubert is coming round for me to ride with him on the Row."

"Very well; but you know, Clare, that you cannot expect your uncle to go on like this for more than your first season; he, like myself, will naturally expect you to settle in life, and make a good match; and, tell you when Vernon Westcliffe returns—"

Clare was off like a shot, and the next minute, in the drawing-room above, a rhapsodie of Liszt's rang out with, I must confess, far more passion and *verve* than correctness of execution or attention to light and shade; while mamma, as the door closed on her deliberately-made speech, laughed till she cried.

One morning not long after this, there lay on the breakfast-table amongst several letters one bearing the post-mark "Ottercombe."

Lady Aubrey opened it, read, and with a radiant smile and exclamation—

"That's Gertie, all over!" Tossed it to Clare.

The letter began: "My dearest Florence," and proceeded to express the utmost joy at the odd way she had discovered her old schoolfellow after so many years of that drifting apart, which is too often the inevitable end of early friendships. The writer was longing now to see her and "her child." Only fancy the beautiful Clare Aubrey, of whom her girls read in the fashionable papers—and "slaters," &c.—being *your* daughter. She had, she said, two girls of her own, twins of eighteen, not yet out. And for this autumn her husband had taken a beautiful place, ready-furnished at Ottercombe—a remote little village on the Devonshire coast—for the benefit principally of his son, who was an invalid. She concluded by an invitation, couched in the warmest terms, for Lady Aubrey and her daughter to come down to Ottercombe Hall the first week in August, and remain as long as they did; she fancied the girls and Clare would be first-rate friends, &c. &c.

A postscript added that she was Mrs. Charles Westcliffe, as they were the younger branch.

"Now, my dear, isn't this the very thing?" said Lady Aubrey delightedly. "Of course, I must pay my visit to Mrs. Cavendish first, and join you later; but you, dear, can go next week, as she says."

"Yes," Clare said, dubiously, "it would be awfully jolly, certainly, but—"

The fact was that there lay in Clare's mind a dim, vague suspicion that Vernon would be with these cousins, and that her mother knew it. The first impulse was to refuse the visit on that barest suspicion; her next, a defiant determination to punish them all if it so turned out, by utterly disgusting him with her cruel snubbing, and flirting with the most impossible person that came in her way. With this dutiful scheme in her curly, wicked little noddle the dangerous young rebel consented to go, and consequently, presently the page posted a letter addressed to Mrs. Charles Westcliffe, Ottercombe Hall, Devon.

Oh, if beautiful wilful Clare could only have seen the reception of that letter! How very lucky it is that magic mirrors and chairs of truth are things of fairyland only—not every day nineteenth century life!

CHAPTER III.

"THE REBEL" AT OTTERCOMBE HALL.

MRS. CHARLES WESTCLIFFE, *née* Poynter, wrote again before the 3rd of August. Clare need not bring a maid, as her daughter's maid would wait on her. The nearest station was at the little town of D—, six miles off, and of course a carriage should be sent to meet the traveller; indeed, Mr. Westcliffe would certainly meet her himself. The best train to come by was that which reached D— at five o'clock.

Young people like new scenes, and Clare Aubrey, the belle of the season, satiated perhaps with the very sensation she had made, went off in high spirits. Sir Hubert drove her to Paddington in his own carriage, and put her and her luggage under the care of the guard, who, it must in fairness be said, thoroughly executed his charge—as much for the sake of the bonnie young face as for the bright half sovereign tipped into his hand.

But neither the soft cushions of a first-class carriage, or a pleasant book, or an attentive guard can make a long railway journey anything but horribly wearisome; and Clare was so tired of sitting still by the time the train reached D—, and so glad to be there, that she could have hugged the tall brown-bearded guard as he came to hand her out before she had time to move.

"Be you very tired, missy? You stand a minute, while I'll see your luggage out."

"Thanks, so much."

But at this moment a fine-looking elderly gentleman, who had been watching the few passengers who got out, caught sight of the tall slight figure standing there, and came straight up to her, lifting his hat with a smile: "I feel sure that you are the young lady I am come for—Lady Aubrey's daughter."

Clare shook hands at once. "Yes, and you then are Mr. Westcliffe; how kind of you to come yourself. You should not," she said, with that sweet deference to his years, so charming to see, and far too rarely seen in these days.

"Not meet my own guest, my dear! It must be either myself or my son; and he, poor lad, is invalided for life, I fear. Porter, bring this lady's luggage out to my carriage. Come, dear."

He was such a jolly genial being that Clare lost her heart forthwith, and clasped her pretty little hand on his arm as if he had been her own father.

"I wonder how many hearts you have broken now this season, Miss Clare," said he, as the carriage rolled smoothly along the white road; "a lot, I'm afraid."

"None at all, I think," said Clare, laughing. "The days are over when

"Knights and nobles for a lady's love
Will spoor the dragon."

"I don't know that. I'm fifty, but I think I could do something for bright eyes still. Look, there's the first glimpse of the sea."

That chained Clare's bright eyes and ready tongue. How she loved the grand sea!

"The ocean old—centuries old,
Strong as youth, and as uncontrolled."

And then the carriage rolled through lofty gates into the spacious park of Ottercombe Hall—bathed in all the rich golden beauty of a mellow August evening—for it was now between six and seven.

Either there had been a watch kept for the carriage, or the roll of wheels had been heard, for as it drew up before the fine entrance there on the threshold stood a handsome lady—apparently not more than thirty-eight or forty—and a little behind her two very pretty girls, perhaps a year or two older than Clare herself.

"Welcome, my dear child," said her hostess, taking both her hands, and kissing her cheek. "The daughter of Florence Dacre cannot be a stranger to me or mine: these are my two daughters, Lisa and Marian."

Both of whom embraced the guest warmly. "It's so awfully jolly of you to come, you know," exclaimed the older, Lisa, as they carried her off to the apartment prepared for her, where their maid was speedily busied in unpacking the visitor's luggage.

"I think it's awfully jolly of you all to have me," answered Clare, "just because our mothers were schoolmates."

Here Marian suddenly stooped over the toilet-table, with something very like a little giggle; but perhaps it was only girlish excitement, for she said the next moment, "Oh, but that's just right, isn't it?"

"Which dress will you wear, miss, please?" asked the lady's maid, pausing in her deft task, with a lovely cream cashmere with crimson trimmings in her hand.

"Oh, that will do charmingly," exclaimed Lisa. "It's high tea, you know, not dinner! Mother always declares that is the nicest meal to have after a long journey, and she was sure you would prefer it."

"But, indeed," began Clare, "why should she alter for me! I am so sorry."

"There, don't distress yourself," cried out Lisa, gaily, "for we are quite doing the rural here, I assure you. Oh, that dress is too lovely. There's the gong, so we'll go to the dining-room as you're ready. Elizabeth, do you know if my brother is coming into tea with us?"

"No, Miss Lisa. I heard him tell William that he should not leave his sofa in the drawing-room, as he was too tired to sit up so long."

Lisa pushed out a vexed lip, and muttered to her sister—not, however, too inaudibly for Clare to unavoidably hear the words,—

"Stuff! It's just his temper again, because I wouldn't go out with him to-day. One can't be slaves just because he's an invalid."

Had Clare heard aright? The cruel, unsisterly, unwomanly words gave her a positive shock of disgust. How shameful to speak so of their poor invalid brother, to whom it ought to be their greatest pleasure to minister. Well for Clare that she was a London—a society-bred girl, accustomed to veil her feelings and face—or something of those feelings might have perhaps been discernible. Still as she moved to the door, the very erect carriage of head and form was certainly expressive; and it might, perhaps, have been that which made Marian bite her lips so hard and reddened as she brought up the rear, though both the action and the red flush looked something very like desperately repressed laughter.

The thought crossed Clare as they took their seats, "Is it possible that the poor fellow's stepmother and half-sisters neglect or snub him?"

O, Clare, Clare! Wild, rebellious, tender-hearted Clare! Dangerous, and in danger already!

During the meal the invalid was not named; it was clear that attendance on him was, so far, left to the servants, though it would certainly have seemed more natural and kindly for one of the girls to cross the wide hall and see that he had all he required.

However, conversation flowed on easily. Mrs. Charles Westcliffe asked Clare all about her mother. Where had she gone visiting? How soon might they expect her here? She supposed she still retained her good looks, for she had been so pretty as a girl. Was Clare considered like her, &c.? Then the lady said,—

"By-the-bye, my dear, I suppose you met a kinsman of ours—the elder branch—this season? For I believe he was in town a short while. I mean young Vernon Westcliffe."

"No," said Clare Aubrey, carelessly. "I never met him at all, Mrs. Westcliffe; never even saw him."

"Indeed; we always call him Rex whenever (rarely enough) he has been here, because, you see, my husband's son's name is Vernon too, and it makes confusion. And his cousin is named Rex Vernon, so we can choose. Shall we go to the drawing-room now? I see you have all finished."

Sooth to say, Clare was very curious to see this second Vernon Westcliffe, and rose as the rest did so.

When the drawing-room door was opened it revealed at once an immense and luxurious apartment, flooded with light from two costly chandeliers; but the sight which at once drew Clare's bright eyes, and went to her very heart, was that which of all acutely painful sights is the saddest for a woman to see—a young strong man laid low and helpless in the rich pride of his manhood and beauty. There, on a couch, by one of the open windows, half covered with a crimson India shawl, lay the tall graceful form of a very handsome man, of six or seven-and-twenty, one arm thrown back under the dark curly head, the other tossed across his breast as if in very restlessness. As the door opened he started, and turned his face with a quick flush and movement, as if he would have sprung to his feet; then instantly sank back with a look of extreme pain, setting the white teeth for a moment, as Clare saw.

"I have brought the visitor at last, Vernon," said Mrs. Westcliffe, calmly, even coldly—not a hint or touch in tone or look of that kindness there should have been.

With an evident effort the young man lifted himself on his left arm, and held out his right hand.

"I am honoured, Miss Aubrey, indeed," said the softest, most musical tones that ever fell on a woman's ear. "I hope you are not very fatigued with your journey?"

"Oh, no, thanks; although a long railway journey is certainly a stupid enough affair, save for the looking to its pleasant termination. What lovely scenery you have here," added Clare. "I never have been in this part of Devon before, so that it's all new to me."

"We must make it familiar before you leave it, then," said Vernon; "the girls can take you all manner of jolly excursions."

"And you, too," said Clare, impulsively. He shook his head sadly.

"No, I should only hamper your movements and the girls." He bit his lip under the silky moustache as if too much had slipped out unawares; then added, quietly, "I do very well here, you know, or just out in the garden or beach in my wheeled chair, with my man William. I'm used to being much alone."

Perhaps he was unconscious how much the gentle unselfish words let out to his secretly indignant listener; but his stepmother said, smoothly, as she took up some dainty embroidery:

"I am afraid the girls are too chatty and noisy for him, my dear Clare, and then they would want the carriage or chair to go faster and further than he could bear, and he reads so much that I daresay he prefers to be left in peace; don't you, Vernon?"

O, the longing look with which those beautiful dark eyes went out over the wide landscape, the quick quiver of the sensitive lip, the almost passionately restless movement of the hand. What a tale it all told to Clare that belied his light answer!

"Mother is right, Miss Aubrey; you must not mind me; all the young birds must not have their pretty wings clipped, you know, because one of them is wounded."

Clare turned to look out of window to hide eyes blinded with tears, and the next minute Lisa asked her to sing or play; she was sure she did both, adding that "Vernon was such a musician he would be sure to enjoy her playing."

Clare laughed and went to the piano—a fine Broadwood grand. She was gifted in no mean degree, passionately fond of music, and the pupil of famous masters, both instrumentally and vocally, for she had a rich, fresh mezzo, smooth as velvet.

"You must not be too critical then, please, Mr. Vernon," she said, "for I am still only a student. Shall I play or sing first?"

"Oh, sing, please!" exclaimed Marian.

"My dear," said her mother, reprovingly, "let your brother answer."

"It doesn't matter which it is," said Vernon, "since whatever Miss Aubrey does must be charming."

"You haven't forgotten pretty speeches any-

how," laughed Lisa, Clare thought, with a

look of tact and good taste. "So sing first,

please, Clare; here is your music."

So Clare sang first—one of Rubinstein's

exquisite songs—but not for Lisa or Marian did

the rich young voice pour forth its wealth.

She felt only one listener—that prostrate, help-

less form by the window—to whom no one

seemed to give much attention or affection,

though he had such extra claims on both. And

the soft "thank you" was far more than all

the enthusiastic plaudits of the other three,

for Mr. Westcliffe had not come in.

When Clare laid her pretty head on her

white pillow that night, her eyes—open or closed—

saw still the handsome statuesque face of

the unfortunate Vernon Westcliffe; her ears,

her heart, still heard his low, musical voice,

her hand still felt the clasp of his.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE DANGEROUS REBEL IN DANGER."

The first week confirmed Clare's impression with absolute and most painful certainty. If Vernon's step-mother and half-sisters did not actually neglect him, it came so near as to be practically little better. Indeed, they saw little of him that whole week, since the young guest naturally felt that whatever she might do in the way of attention must of necessity be a tacit reproach to them; they—sweet, agreeable to her, to an extent that made the contrast puzzling to her—evidently considered the sufferer a bother, and that, so long as "that good William" was with him, or his father, their part of affection and duty was fulfilled. Once or twice in the first day or two, when excursions were being planned, Clare ventured to suggest that "Mr. Vernon might, perhaps like to drive, he looked so dull by himself," she was met by carelessness—"Oh, no, dear, we should have to turn back so soon" from one; or from Mrs. Westcliffe a decisive "William will wheel his chair to the beach for an hour or two, my love."

Clare turned away, biting her lips, her breast heaving with indignation, her heart sore. "Cruel! shameful!" she muttered, as she ran to her room to dress, "How can they treat him so! and he never looks a complaint, poor dear fellow. I won't stand it for long, I can tell them, whether they like it or not. I couldn't if I'm to stop, and that's the best of it. One can do what one likes with a man so wrecked for life as that! They couldn't think I was only flirting, whatever I do, as if he was like other men, and I don't care if they do. His dear old father is the only one who is really kind to him. I can't make it out; they all three look such charmingly womanly women! But, so much for appearances," concluded wise seventeen; "it's another experience."

Miss Clare had a very decided will of her own, besides being a spoiled petted witch at home and abroad; and when she said, "I will

do so-and-so," she generally did do it, in some, way or another; and she kept her resolution now—this beautiful, dangerous rebel—little dreaming how she was putting herself in danger. She was gifted, too, with thoroughly feminine tact and wit, and sat about getting her way in a manner which it was impossible to thwart, she being the guest.

It was one gorgeous morning, when scarce a breath disturbed leaf or mass of waters, as they lay glistening beneath the blaze of sunlight. Lisa and Marian declared it was too hot for anything, how could Clare be so lively—a perfect cricket! Vernon had been just like that in hot weather before his accident.

"Shows his sense," said Clare, pirouetting out of the open breakfast room door to that of the drawing-room—also wide open—and she stopped abruptly. Vernon lay on his couch, indeed; but his book was flung to the foot, his face was buried in the silken cushion—the fingers of one slender hand clenched, the whole attitude one of anguish, mental or physical suffering, or both. The sight of that man left to lie there alone and suffering, struck the girl's heart like a stab; and the noble, passionate woman's impulse to console and the action were one and the same. In an instant she was at his side, her hand laid on his shoulder, her voice trembling.

"Please forgive me, but—you are suffering, I am sure."

Vernon started round, his bronzed cheek flushed, his dark eyes looking straight up into the beautiful, tender face above him with an expression that puzzled her.

"Never mind, what does it matter?" he muttered, hoarsely. "It's nothing; only I thought I was alone; leave me, why should you—"

He buried his face again, and his whole form shook with emotion; but when the man's proud control and strength broke down, the woman, womanlike, was strong.

Clare sat down on the edge of the broad sofa, and put one hand in his.

"I will not leave you—I can not leave you alone just because you are suffering! Is not there something I can do for you, Mr. Vernon?"

His fingers closed almost convulsively in that soft, clinging little hand; but it was full half a minute before he lifted his face again, and then a change had gone over it. There seemed a new light in those brilliant dark eyes, in every chiselled feature.

"You have done something; you have given me that which no gold can buy—the deep, tender sympathy of a woman's heart for suffering that is mental, not physical—a suffering that sometimes masters my very manhood, strive as I will. But now I shall have the precious memory of your sympathy through the lonely hours. Leave me now; go back to the girls and amuse yourself; be happy while you can, child."

Clare did not move from her perch on his sofa, safe in the immunity of his heavy affliction. Safer still in the instinctive feeling that he would not misjudge her, she was secure in the position she had carried, and meant not only to keep, but strengthen.

"I am happier here than anywhere else," she said, in her bright, saucy way that was so irresistibly witching. "Besides, the girls are goose enough not to like this glorious sun. I do—so do you, I know; and I am just going to spend the whole morning with you out on the sands under the rocks. William may just bring round your pretty pony chaise and go away. I shall take care of you and the Shetlands, I daresay. "No, no, sir!" she put an imperative little hand on his lips, and laughed gaily when he, of course, kissed it. "I own no authority but my own sweet will."

"You are a very dangerous rebel then," said the young man, sinking back again. "I ought not to let you sacrifice your whole morning for me; but how can I put away the happiness of companionship—such a companion, too?"

"Why should you," said she. "If I can only make you happy for a few hours it will

make me so glad—so happy. I'll ring for you to tell your courier, and I'll fetch my hat at once."

She danced out of the room, and paused at the opposite door to say:

"I am going down to the sea with your brother, girls; don't wonder where I am."

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Westcliffe, "I really cannot; it's too hot for you."

"Oh, no, I love heat. I'm all right, indeed." And off she sprang before any one could remonstrate.

It was certainly very odd, but as she vanished mother and daughter all went into fits of smothered laughter.

What was there to laugh at? Behind her back, of course.

When Clare returned to the drawing-room William was just outside the window with the daintiest pony chaise drawn by a pair of the most beautiful little Shetland ponies that eyes ever saw.

Vernon started half up with such a bright smile as she entered, and eagerly stretched out his hand to William; but Clare sprang forwards. She knew that he could walk a few steps, leaning on someone.

"No, no, let me help you! Lean on my shoulder; I'm quite strong enough."

"You!" Vernon laughed as she had not heard him do yet, and William smiled respectfully. "Such a slip of a thing as you."

"Please do; indeed, you won't hurt me."

He hesitated, and glanced at William. The man nodded with an odd smile, and his master rose slowly, put one hand firmly on Clare's shoulder; and so leaning on her—not, however, as heavily as she had expected—moved out to the little carriage—slow, certainly; but, if she had been free to notice it minutely, not with that drag and lack of springiness which one would have expected to see with a spinal injury. Yet even that short distance seemed to pain or tire him, for he sank back amongst the voluminous cushions placed in the chaise with a sigh of relief as he took the pretty crimson reins which William handed him.

"Shall I attend you as usual, sir?"

"Oh, no, thank you, Will. Miss Aubrey has quite made up her mind to take care of me to-day."

William bowed and stepped back, and the little equipage started, Clare walking, or rather dancing along beside it, her lively tongue going as nimbly as her pretty feet; while the ponies, who knew the way down to the bay as well as their master, walked soberly along the gravelled road, as if fully conscious of the precious burthen they drew.

The Hall itself was built at the head of an immense lawn and sloping glen, which terminated in an open bay with wide sands, the coast line rising into noble cliffs either way from the bay; the sands, when the tide was out, stretching for miles, with caves and inlets in the coast.

The tide was out this morning, and the blue waters lay lapping lazily on the bar in a hushed tender way, as if they were murmuring a loving prayer for the souls of the dead at rest beneath their waves. Clare stood, leaning lightly against the chair as it stopped on the sands, watching that wondrous book of Heaven's writing; but the man lay watching the girl's speaking face, with such yearning passionate love in the depths of his dark eyes, that it was well she did not look down, when presently she spoke softly:

"From the very first day after I came down I have wanted—oh, so much—to come with you. I could not have gone on like that longer—leaving you so much alone—always alone."

"Why not? I am used to it now," he said, with quiet pathos. "I do not expect it would be selfish to expect or allow young gay things like my sisters to be constantly curtailing their pleasures to be in attendance on an invalid."

It was just the touch to the train that had been laying itself all the week. Clare faced round, her eyes flashing, her cheeks crimson, her lips quivering.

"Forgive me; but I must say it out! It

ought to be their greatest pleasure to attend on you! to give you at least some of their time—to do a thousand things—everything to lighten your burthen. Oh, it's cruel, cruel! how can they!" She turned sharply aside, crushing back the bitter tears.

"By Heaven, this is too much!" muttered Vernon, suddenly covering his eyes. "I cannot bear it much longer!"

But she heard this time, not the words, and was at his side, startled penitent.

"Oh, please forgive me! What a wretch I am to be so impulsive! What right had I to speak a word of reproach of your sisters. Oh, please do say you forgive me!"

She was so innocently earnest, so pitifully, deeply distressed lest she had wounded him, yet, further, that it was very, very hard for anything masculine to resist drawing the beautiful face down to kiss away the tears. He did take the pleading little hand from his shoulder into his closer clasp, and it was several seconds before he dared trust himself to speak.

"Hush! There is nothing for me to forgive. You cannot wound me, Clare. Ah, pardon; I hear the sweet name so often; and—well, may I not claim an invalid's privilege—immunity from cold conventionalities?"

"Oh, yes; please do call me Clare—only Clare," she said, brightening up again quite to her own self. "I hate stupid conventional things."

"So do I, Clare, only—" said wicked Vernon, with the utmost coolness, "you must not have a one-sided bargain. I have a Christian name as well as you."

"Oh," said Clare, laughing, and colouring a little; "but that is rather different. You know your people—"

"Bother my people!" said he, undutifully. "I shall say I asked it, and plead privilege again. You can't refuse me such a simple pleasure, Clare. I haven't many."

Her hand trembled in his clasp, and her heart beat fast. She knew not why, poor lassie, as she said,—

"I know that too well, Vernon."

"Ah, thanks; that sounds like a friend, indeed. What do you say to an excursion, Clare? The tide is out, and the sands for miles are dry and firm." (He pointed eastwards.) "Shall we go on that way, at our ease?"

"How jolly! But no; you will be tired, sitting so long."

"I shall not be tired, my dear. I am reclining back amongst these cushions, besides. And two or three miles along the coast there is a tiny hamlet and inn down in a cave where we can lunch."

"How glorious!" cried the girl, dancing with delight. "Come, Cosmos and Damian, you dear little pets, you must do some work to-day. Oh, not too slowly, Vernon. I am a fast walker and a good pedestrian."

"Well, if you get tired, witch, or like a lift I daresay I can make room for you beside me. I'm slight built, and you are such a slender sapling."

"It would be a close fit, though," said she, looking round, and then capered off to the end of the sands for a minute.

"By the saints! but I have no objection to that," muttered Vernon Westcliffe, playing with his moustache. "Clare, Clare, what if you will not forgive me? What if I lose you after all? No, I cannot bear the thought of life without thee, my darling! What an innocent child she is, after all—the more witching for that."

A veritable witch, that came flying back to him with sparkling eyes and dancing curls of golden brown.

"It's just struck me, Vernon, that if the tide comes in—right in—shall we get back past all these cliffs?"

He looked out to sea; then smiled.

"Oh, yes, that is all right, dear. Unless in the high tides or in dirty weather the sea does not flow in up to the cliffs—only, perhaps, here and there the water may run up with the flow a few inches."

"Oh." She looked up at the cliffs. "Because it would be dreadful if anything happened to you. You could not climb even if there was a place to escape to."

"But you could," said Westcliffe, quietly. "You had follow! You know I would never save myself and leave you to be drowned. You know it."

"I know I would not let you stay if such a danger happened."

"I shouldn't ask you, you may be sure," said she, saucily. But he knew she meant it.

"Ah, well, the question won't arise, I hope," Vernon answered. "I'll tell you what, Clare, we'll make a junketting of it to come into Devonshire, and not go junketting would be like going to Rome and not hearing mass at St. Peter's."

CHAPTER V.

"THERE'S DANGER IN CROSSING BY TWICKENHAM FERRY."

SOMETIMES walking at the pony's heads, sometimes by the side of the chair, Clare's lively chatter, sweet unflinching attentions, and thousand graces would have charmed away any suffering, and witched away any man's heart past redemption.

Vernon could well have wished these happy hours to last for ever.

"I suppose we must have nearly come the three miles now," she said, presently, "and I see a few children on the sands right ahead, so the hamlet must be near."

"I see them, and one or two men; fishermen, I daresay," answered Westcliffe; "the cove and hamlet are just round that jutting out rock."

"You were never down at Ottercombe till lately, were you, Vernon?"

"No; my father took the Hall there for my benefit, but—"

He paused.

"Perhaps the air will be beneficial," said the girl, lightly.

He shook his head.

"I have no hope at all, Clare, of that."

"But—but—don't they give you some hope?"

"What! the doctors, child? No, they can never make me again what I was years ago."

"Vernon! oh don't say that—don't say that," she said, under her breath; "it is so dreadful."

"Hush, Clare. I can bear anything—everything—but to see you so distressed. I'm not worth it. Don't think about the future now, but enjoy the present. By-the-by, Clare, did you hear my father last evening say something to Mrs Westcliffe—oh, bah!—mother, I ought to say—about a guest being expected to-day or to-morrow?"

"No; I heard nothing. Who is it, I wonder?"

"Well, I asked father this morning, and he said he had written to ask down our kinsman, Rex Westcliffe."

Covertly watching her face as he spoke he saw her flush slightly, and the curly head give just the slightest—most inimitable—little toss.

"Oh," she said, carelessly; "and when is he coming?"

"Either to-day or to-morrow, I fancy. It will be jolly for you girls to go riding and boating with him. He's an awfully nice fellow."

"Is he," still with that pretty chin in the air. "How dared mamma (she suspected at once) make this plan to throw her in that detestable Vernon Westcliffe's way? They can go out if they like, but I'd rather come with you, if you'll have me."

His eyes flashed with a look of almost triumphant joy.

"If I will have you?" Then quickly, "no, Clare, I could not let your generous kind heart so sacrifice your time to an invalid. You did not come here to be a slave, but a visitor. I could not allow it."

"What, then," said Clare, gaily, choking

back she scarce knew what a world of feeling; "you won't let your guest be happy in her own way?"

"Oh, Clare! wicked Clare! What a way to put it!"

"Ah! Now you think that look and tone of reproach perfectly killing, I know, sir, but I assure you it is not, on me—quite; only I shall reserve the battle till the time is actually needed."

"Very well," He lay back with a very contented look in his large eyes. "I'll do the same—I'll do the same, fair antagonist."

"Ha, ha! You'll be defeated, Vernon."

"I think not, you saucy maiden," said he, significantly. "But let those laugh who win. There is the inn."

Clare took the off pony's head again, and led the pair up to the door of the pretty country inn, by sign the Three Fishers. Out came mine host himself at sight of such guests, and begged to know their pleasure. He had heard of the young master up at the great Hall, and guessed who the gentleman was, at any rate.

Clare, stooping down, whispered softly,—

"Will you come in?"

"Yes, dear. Well, mine host, have you a private room, and the best of your famed Devonshire junket?"

"Yes, sir; the best of everything and a pretty parlour there, looking over the sea."

"Capital; then have my horses seen to, please, and serve us with junket, fruit, anything good you have, for this lady's luncheon. Now, Clare."

"Let me have the honour, sir?"

"No, thanks; my young friend is used to me," and lifting himself erect, he leaned once more on Clare's shoulder—a strong and steady support, too—and slowly followed the landlord's lead to the private parlour.

"The carriage cushions, please," said Clare, quickly, as Vernon, apparently a little exhausted, sank on the old-fashioned settee. Surely it was almost worth while to be invalided to have such a tender nurse as this; and the smile he gave her was certainly worth all the gallantry and homage laid at the beauty's feet all last season.

"Isn't this too lovely?" she said, seating herself beside him at the window, while they waited for the junket to be made.

"I don't know about too lovely," said he, contentedly, letting his gaze rest on the beautiful face. "But I know that this day will live to me as one of the brightest, happiest memories of my life."

"Will it! will it really?"

"Yes, Clare."

"So it will in mine," she said softly, with all the noblest, purest happiness, in the sweet innocent eyes that met his so frankly. "I've never before in my spoiled useless life done any good, or made any one happy; and now I have."

Vernon said nothing because he dared not; but he shook his head as he lay looking out of the window, and as he did so he noticed that the tide seemed to have just turned.

Then the landlady—a bonnie brown-eyed West-countrywoman, came in with cloth and tray, laden with the best the house afforded—great plump cherries, and early wall fruit, and the dish of rich junket, with its accompanying bowl of yellow cream, thick—like butter almost. Clare laughed, and said, "they should not want any dinner," as she drew the table to the sofa, and began to do the honours.

"Well—how do you like it?" Vernon asked, presently.

"It's delicious stuff, but I don't believe it would be half so nice at home in a proper way you know—would it?"

"Certainly not; half the fun is to come out for it, with such a witch as Clare Aubrey, when we are supposed to be back to respectable luncheon."

She laughed merrily—then said suddenly.

"I suppose this cousin of yours will come in time for dinner?"

"I expect so," said Westcliffe, with a very

keen and amused glance under his long lashes, "people mostly do."

Clare looked at her watch—how the time had slipped by—put it back, and coming round to his side, said coaxingly:

"Vernon—don't let's go back to dinner at all."

Vernon broke into such an amused laugh that Clare considered she could almost have fancied that he knew something about her mother's matrimonial designs for her.

"Oh, Clare! Clare! you said that so exactly like a coaxing child," he said; and Clare drew a freer breath again. "I don't want to go back, Heaven knows, but I ought to say no to you only. Faith, I cannot."

"You are a good boy!" exclaimed Clare, clapping her hands. "We might go on a bit further, or lounge out there just as long as we please."

"We'll miss the dinner hour, at any rate, you wild witch. Ring the bell then."

She obeyed; and Westcliffe, when the host appeared, paid the bill, and ordered the little carriage round.

By the time the master was again settled in it; it was past three and the moment they were fairly out on the sands he perceived that the wind had freshened considerably, and chopped from due south to south by west, also that the tide had made very decided progress in its flow.

"I wish we had brought the dog," said Clare, presently.

"The sun was too hot for him, my dear child. I wonder what they have been doing all day at home?"

"The ladies?" laughed Clare. "Oh, fanning themselves, and declaring it is too hot to live, poor things."

Chatting happily the minutes slid away, and it was quite another hour before they really turned homewards again.

"Now the wind is getting up," Clare said, presently, "and helping the tide up quicker. What a lark if it actually does reach that half mile or so of cliffs where they run out so on the beach."

Vernon's glance went out over the expanse of advancing waters, then ahead with just a shade of anxiety. Were it so very sure and safe as he had thought if the wind still freshened?

The coast was very irregular and indented. The part to which Clare had alluded was about half way, then came an inlet, then a mass of rocks, called Otter Point, jutting well out, after rounding which there was plenty of sands, even at flood tide, right up to their own little bay.

When they reached the first promontory both man and girl saw at once that already as each wavelet broke and ran up it just wetted the sands up to the base of rocky ground.

"See," said Vernon, pointing, and stopping his ponies, "the sea is an inch or two already, and will be more before we pass that half mile. You must!"

She interrupted, delightfully:

"What fun. I must wade; it will be only ankle deep, and I'll walk barefooted."

"No," answered Westcliffe, decidedly, "it will perhaps rise higher than that. We must drive on, and you must get in here, just up beside me, as I said before."

Clare looked at him, coloured a little, and hesitated.

"Step in on my right," he said again, drawing himself a little more erect against the cushions.

"But I shall cramp you—hurt you."

"I can manage that, child. Come."

Tone and manner were imperative now, and Clare stepped in, seating herself a little sideways and forward, so as not to cramp his right arm much. Vernon drove on at once, but he soon saw that her position was uneasy.

"I think the ponies enjoy splashing their dear little hoofs through the water," said Clare.

"Oh, they like it. Clare, you are in a constrained position," he added. "See, my dear

child, by your leave I can much improve it for us both. Sit back comfortably against my shoulder—so."

He lifted his right arm—itself somewhat cramped—and, as he obeyed him, passed it lightly behind her, half round her, thus making the position of each quite easy. It was done in such a quiet matter-of-course way that Clare never dreamed how the man's heart beat—how much he would have given to draw that slight form within his arm, and closer—closer to his breast, and whisper his secret.

Ah, not yet—he dared not.

The sea had not reached above the lower part of the wheels by the time they reached the end of the promontory, and dry sands again for about a mile. Clare glanced around in her companion's handsome face; he was looking ahead with an anxious expression that made her ask at once:

"Are you anxious, Vernon? Do you think we shall not get round Otter Point?"

He answered:

"The wind has so freshened, and the tide run in so fast and higher than usual, that by the time we can reach the Point we shall not be able to pass it till the tide ebbs again."

"But it won't fill this stretch of bay we're crossing now, will it? Don't worry about me, you know. I'm not a bit afraid—how could I be with you?"

"Dear Clare, thanks; but I should be very sorry for you to get a thorough drenching. But I'm pretty sure this tide won't cover the bay at all. The only bother is that if we are cut off once at the Point, we shall be prisoner here for some time—a long time."

"But we shall be quite safe?"

"Yes."

"Then it doesn't matter, if you don't mind," said Clare lightly, as he still drove on as quick as the ponies could get over the sands. "I don't suppose they will be fidgety at the Hall; they'll be too busy with your cousin and dinner to ask about us 'runaways.'"

Westcliffe laughed; certainly, personally, he had no objection to a very lengthened detention with this bright beautiful witch at his side—nay within his clasp, resting against him.

The sea was up to Otter Point indeed, fairly lashing against the rocky wall—far too high to attempt to pass; they would have been swamped breast-high in a minute. Vernon turned the ponies, and took up a position beyond where he reckoned the water would reach at all; and presently, while chatting to her of the many foreign places he had been to, he walked the ponies slowly to and fro, to prevent them getting restive and cold.

"For," he observed, "after the heat of the sun the wind will perhaps strike chilly before long."

Clare glanced anxiously at him, and said quickly,—

"I hope you will not get chilled. It would be so harmful."

"My dear child, I am all right," said Vernon, smiling. "Fifty chills will not hurt me. I am only afraid for you. I wish you had a scarf."

"I don't want one, indeed. How the time has passed quickly while you were telling me about your travels! Why, it is near seven; and, look, I think the tide has turned."

"I was sure of that a minute ago; but, unless this breeze drops, it will be an hour before we can drive round the Point without drenching the whole floor of the chair and those little feet of yours, which would be a pity after waiting so long to avoid the sea's encroachment. You are chilly; you shivered just now."

"It was only a second, as the breeze caught us," she said; but Vernon involuntarily drew the girl close to him.

"I must not let you catch cold, you know," he said, lightly; and then somehow they both sat for a long time silent in the strange mystic beauty of the autumn evening, each in a sweet vague delicious dream of the other—the man fully, intensely conscious of the passionate

love that held his whole being captive; the girl only feeling that she was very, very happy, without knowing or thinking why—only that he was a sufferer, an invalid, neglected, and she had somehow been able to give him a few bright hours.

O Clare, Clare! so innocent, despite your seventeen-year-old wisdom, so blind to love's insidious grasp, so utterly unconscious that her very heart was already gone from her own keeping into the hold of this man at her side.

It was past eight before the tide had retired enough for them to drive round Otter Point, and then there was still some distance to reach their bay, from whence the road led up to the Hall.

By the time this was gained it was dark, and they heard voices from the lawn.

"What a lark!" said Clare. "I do believe they're coming to look for a sign of us. I'll walk now, please, Vernon, and lead the ponies up the slope."

And, jumping lightly out, she went to Cosmo's shaggy head.

"There they all are," exclaimed Vernon. "They see us. And there is Rex—foremost with Lisa."

Clare felt herself in for it, now there was the detested Vernon Westcliffe. It was a slight but to one at least, a significant action; but as he—her Vernon—spoke she dropped back to the side of the carriage—to his side—with her hand resting on the chair.

From that haven she met the introduction to this Rex—Vernon Westcliffe; certainly a handsome young fellow, but, she decided with some wonder, not to be compared to her invalid Vernon, who greeted the other with a very warm—

"Dear Rex, I'm so glad to see you."

And then they were surrounded by the rest. "Where had they been? They had got quite in a fright at last. How could he keep Clare out so long; and no dinner either!" This from Mrs. Westcliffe.

"Oh, we're all right, mother," Vernon declared. "The tide shut us up west of the Point; and now we want some tea, don't we, Clare?"

CHAPTER VI.

PASSING DAYS AND WEEKS.

THIS cousin, Rex Westcliffe, soon made it apparent that he preferred Miss Aubrey to his cousins; but the young rebel, true to her declaration of war, snubbed him unmercifully and attached herself totally to the service of the invalid son of the house despite his remonstrance. She of course did her part as guest gracefully, and went out with the others. But she managed somehow, especially when the girls—Lisa in particular—was flirting with Rex, to slip off to Vernie's couch or garden-chair; and if she were missing they all knew that they could find her wherever Vernon was. "Well," she said at last one day to Lisa, who had said shortly that he was used to be alone and liked it, "If you like to think so you can, but I don't. I think it seems hard to leave him so much. You may say what you will, but he does feel it."

"Well, my dear, we couldn't be always with him, you see, and he goes out in the heat, too."

"Well, anyway, I'm going to start with him to the beach, and you can follow if you choose."

Marian, perhaps a little ashamed, said she would also go, and Lisa and her would follow. So Clare ran off to tell her chum. As she neared the drawing-room door she heard steps—words she was sure—and as she touched the lock a quick sound, as if some one had given almost a spring; but when she entered, lo! only Vernon was there on his couch.

"Why," she said, "I heard movements!"

"Nero was here just now," said he quietly, but he's just jumped out of the window."

"Oh! I thought it was more like a step."

"By Jove! did you?" muttered the young man; but he said nothing aloud, and presently they started out.

Of course in her letters to her mother Clare gave her opinion more freely of the family.

"It is shameful the way they all, except his father, neglect Vernon. I can't bear to see it, mother. If I were his sister I should just be proud to devote myself to him."

"You'll do that, sweetheart," muttered Lady Aubrey, smiling, and showed the letter to her brother-in-law. What there was to laugh over so much in the letter was amazing—they did, that is certain; and finally, about a month after Clare's arrival at Ottercombe Hall, her mother wrote to Mrs. Westcliffe to name her own appearance and Sir Hubert's, to whom Gertrude had intended the invitations. So Lady Aubrey wrote to her daughter, who thinking that now young Westcliffe was there, she really had the game in her own hands.

In this way the weeks had gone by all too happily, perhaps—for Clare and the sufferer—for whom they would not surely last.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE REBEL A CAPTIVE."

LADY AUBREY and Sir Hubert were expected by the same train that a few weeks ago had brought Clare; and, naturally enough, Mrs. Westcliffe decided to go with her husband to meet her old school-fellow. Lisa adding a brilliant suggestion that they—the four young people—should ride with them, and make a grand escort to the carriage.

Clare did not join in the general assent to this, but went on reading by the window without apparently hearing a word. One glance, however, straight to the half-recumbent form on the couch near the other window, and a very slight negative shake of the curly head told another tale.

Rex Westcliffe, in no way rebuffed by the haughty distance with which the girl had met his very decided attentions, went over to her, and bending down whispered boldly,

"Of course you will come, Miss Aubrey, it will be so delightful a ride."

"Isn't that a matter of opinion?" said she, carelessly.

"Not to me," whispered Rex, with a look that gave the words point, "there is happiness where you are—for me."

"What a sentimental speech, Mr. Westcliffe; I'm awfully sorry, really, but I'm not inclined to join the ride."

The words caught Lisa's ear, and she turned round with a vexed:

"Nonsense, Clare, dear; come and dress."

"Thanks—I'm tired, we've been out so much lately; so I'll stop at home and read aloud to Vernon a bit—then in a lower tone—"I think his head aches, and—and it wouldn't seem quite kind for us all to leave him alone again."

"You're too provoking, Clare," in a whisper. "Vernon doesn't mind, and really you must see that Rex does care very much whether you go or not."

If Lisa really wished their guest to go this was the most maladroit speech she could possibly have made. Clare flushed haughtily, but said with a laugh, lest she should say more than courtesy permitted:

"He can flirt with you then, dear, as a proxy; my mother won't mind my remaining behind, since you three will make so gallant an escort for the carriage."

And to end the matter at that Miss Clare slipped out of the room, and up to her own. She heard the two girls come up to dress, chatting and laughing in their room next to her's and when they left it she joined them to see the party go off.

"Vernon is very angry with you for stopping," Marian said at the last; "He guessed it was on his account, and vows he'll scold you properly if you go near him."

"All right," was the rebel's jaunty reply, "I'll chance that."

And as the party swept off, Clare went back to the drawing-room, though, as she closed the door for the first time, a new, shy sensation came over—a strange feeling too vague to

realise or put into words—perhaps he would think it odd that she had stopped. Poor lassie; how would she know her own heart where thousands older and wiser are as blind.

Vernon was lying in about the same attitude as when she first saw him—a restless position, only too frequent with him; but he turned as the door shut, and stretched out his hand towards her, with a flash of light in his dark eyes that belied his chiding words.

"Come here, you naughty wicked witch, that I may scold you as you deserve."

"Deserve! What have I done?" said she, with very innocent eyes, indeed; but she crossed over and knelt down by his couch, resting her arms on the edge and her pretty saucy chin on her two interlaced hands, her *glace* gone, her winsome, familiar ease quite restored by her manner.

"Done! How dared you lose your ride just to stop with me!"

"You'll be too conceited, won't you, if I were to say that I liked losing the ride best," said the rebel, with all the sauciness of a spoiled child. "It is a shame to leave you—ah, *petite*, I liked being here best."

"Oh, Clare, only a useless wretch of an invalid," said Vernon, half playfully, half sadly, "instead of bright Rex Westcliffe; who—Clare, my dear, I'm afraid you have no worldly wisdom."

The blood suddenly dyed her brow, the tears rushed to her eyes—she was wounded, startled, stung. Why, she scarcely knew, except that it was the *et tu Brute*—the doubt between banter and earnest.

"I hate worldly wisdom; I hate you—" she began, impetuously, and caught her breath sharply at the words "Cousin Rex."

"So do I," said Vernon, quietly answering the first part without seeming to notice the second. Then dropping his hand on her shoulder as she knelt by him, he said rather suddenly:

"Clare, do you remember the day you and I went junketting, the day that Rex came?"

Could she ever forget that day?

"Yes; what a jolly day it was! Why do you ask?"

"Because," said Vernon, meditating, "I've often wondered why the moment I mentioned that Rex was expected that day you coaxed me not to get back to dinner. 'In effect, though you said you had never met him, it was to me at least plain that it was poor Rex you hated to encounter. Was that it, Clare?'"

Clare looked up for one second; but her eyes dropped instantly before his, and the blood rushed to her very brow.

"Don't! don't ask me that," came in a distressed whisper.

He leaned back, playing with his moustache a moment as if in uncertainty; then said:

"Forgive me, my dear child, if I'm presuming on your kindness and sympathy with—my sufferings; presuming on the very immunity and privileges of speech and actions of such as I, and—but may I answer my own questions for you?"

Some subtle change in him, about him, vaguely startled the girl, and made her tremble—something she could feel, but not define for a moment, that made it impossible to refuse the assent he asked, but the fair face dropped into the hands again.

"Yes—if—you—can."

"If, then," said Vernon slowly, "I am not now where I was in the world's whirl, I still hear and know what goes on. I know that my namesake, Vernon Rex Westcliffe, is what mothers consider a 'splendid match,' and teach, or try to teach, their daughters the same fact; and perhaps, not unnaturally, your mother devised such a match for her child—the beauty of the season. Do you forgive me still, Clare; I am only the invalid, you know. I know well what gall and wormwood—what bitterness would be the mere thought that you were to be flung at any man. You thought that the on *dite* of those detestable 'slaters' about a certain youthful beauty whose face was her fortune, and dashing Vernon Westcliffe must

have reached him, and so, when you suddenly found him appear in your temporary rest you shrank from meeting him. Was this all, Clare?"

"Oh, how could you know? Oh, how could you know?" was all the girl could cry, like a sorely-wounded creature, that surely it was cruel and strange that Vernon only smiled, and said:

"Never mind now; and if that is why you have been so cruel to the poor fellow all the time, when—but let me tell you a little secret—he won't mind me—Vernon saw a certain witching face last autumn, unseen himself—and fell in love at first sight. Child—what a start!" For the sofa on which she leaned shook under it with a smothered cry that was half a passionate sob.

"No, no!" Oh don't say that. I hate him! I—I could never love him."

"Never, Clare! never love Vernon Westcliffe?"

It was the one touch more than she could bear, and she burst into sudden passionate tears—poor little rebel!

"How can you be so cruel? Oh, how can you?—I hate him?"

The next moment the slight form was wrapped within a strong right arm, and the beautiful head was drawn on his breast.

"Never, my Clare," said the low passionate tones, "never love Vernon Westcliffe! I know you do, my heart's darling."

Aye, she knows it now, else why that moment's wild delirious happiness as she felt that clasp around her—felt his lips on hers, pressing a lover's passionate kisses, in the daring security of a lover's right—and then the sweet face was hidden again on his bosom, half-sobbing.

"But I didn't know it till just now, and—and—it seemed as if my heart, when you spoke so for—"

"Poor little nestling," whispered Vernon, tenderly, kissing away the tears. "It was shamefully cruel of me, darling; but still it is true that Vernon Westcliffe fell in love with you, sweetest witch."

She lifted her face, now beginning to regain her sauciness.

"How dare you tell such a wicked fib?"

"Is it a fib that I am Vernon Westcliffe, my dangerous rebel?"

"Ah, no; but then you didn't say you—my Vernon—you know; and why do you call me your dangerous rebel?"

His eyes sparkled so wickedly as he said, playing with her silky short curls.

"Are you not a rebel to all your poor mother's schemes? And, by the saints! I think my lost heart is proof enough of your danger. But, Clare,"—his face changed, he leaned back once more, though still keeping his arm around her—"have you thought of what I am? No, no, child; I have been wrong, cruel, selfish. You must not trust your bright young life to such as mine."

"Vernon! oh, Vernon! my heart would break if you put me from you. It is just for this," she said, nestling to him again, "that I loved you, I think—just because no one but your father seemed to care but for you—just because you were neglected and helpless, and—"

"Clare, Clare, my precious heart! I know all that; but oh, will you forgive me when you know the truth?"

She looked up startled, but said, with the simple, exquisite pathos of a true woman's heart,—

"I don't know yet what you mean, but you cannot have possibly done anything which I cannot forgive, since I love you better than life."

Her lover clasped her closely to him again, and, so holding her, said very low,—

"But suppose I had deceived you on almost every point except my name?"

She looked in his face and laughed.

"I don't care if you had. I know you won't tell me that you don't love me."

"Never, Heaven witness!" was the answer. "But still, if to win you were the reason."

"There, lie back, or you'll injure yourself; and don't talk nonsense," said the pretty autocrat, trying to loose his clasp in vain, until he chose.

"I don't know," he said, smiling, "what your mother will say to me, when she destined you for the heir of Westcliffe Hall."

"I don't care what anyone says," said the rebel, defiantly.

"Nor I, by the Lord!" was the answer. "But I think, sweetheart, you are far more likely to refuse to be my wife than your mother is for you."

"If!" The violet eyes opened wide, puzzled—a little frightened, because puzzled. "What can you be driving at? There is some jest, you bad boy."

"No jest, darling, in one fact that I have deceived you"—he dropped his arm from about her—"and though I have by it won all I wanted and played for, all without which my heart's life would be a blank, yet now I fear to lose all by confession. First let me give you back the truth just given. Mrs. Westcliffe is not my stepmother, her daughters are not my half-sisters, and I—am not myself."

"Vernon!"

He faced her again, lifting himself more erect.

"Aye, Clare; forgive me the daring *ruse* if you can; but you have given your precious love, your precious promise, to be wedded wife to—Vernon Westcliffe of Westcliffe Hall."

The girl sprang to her feet as if she had been struck—white as death, trembling like a leaf, gazing on him with wide open eyes, and quivering lips—the next moment she had flung herself again into his outstretched arms, clinging to him like a half-wounded dove, nestling in his bosom.

"It's too late! I can't help it! it is you I love!"

The heart's true cry, and her lover folded her closer; then he said softly:

"But that is only half the *ruse* by which the dangerous rebel is captive at last: your daring wicked lover, Clare, is as sound and free of limb as you are. I have acted a part."

"Not an invalid—not crippled," she repeated dizzily, then hid her face against him with an almost convulsive burst of tears. "Oh, Vernon, it is too much happiness to know that true! It broke my heart to see you wrecked for life."

It was a long time before he could calm and soothe her; perhaps, man-like, he had not gauged how deeply this tender sensitive girl would take such a calamity to heart; and she had been so much with him for weeks in that close companionship which soon ripens into love and friendship.

At last without attempting to move her position, she said in a half whisper:

"But who are these people? for everybody seems to be somebody else."

Now Vernon laughed outright.

"My own darling Clare, it was also my idea, my doing, and your uncle's. This dear old man is my father; Sir Hubert's old friend—and they have always wished me to marry. I had seen you by chance, as I told you, and was only anxious to be a very obedient son; but your wilfulness and your mother's mistake set you so fiercely against poor me, that we knew I had no chance. At my suggestion we all entered into a great conspiracy, and I think on the whole we have acted wonderfully, only that my darling mother and sisters a little over-did the neglect, and dear old Rex Fotheringham, Lisa's fiancé, made love to you a trifle too much. My William was of course in the secret; and many a time in my night or early morning walks you have nearly caught me coming in," said he, laughing, "I don't think I could have stood playing invalid much longer."

"It's all an abominable shame," said the caged rebel, "and I don't think you deserve forgiveness at all."

"Oh, Clare, don't I? Haven't I suffered for your sake! Hasn't it been torture to lie here all these days and weeks when I was nearly

mad to be out; all for your sake, sweetheart! Don't I deserve one kiss of forgiveness?"

The impudent sinner actually bent his handsome face for it till the moustached lips touched hers, and hers gave it in a pretty half shy way.

"Three for luck, darling," he whispered, and took them himself, wicked fellow; then released her, and sprang to his feet, as the roll of wheels and clatter of horse's hoofs were heard.

"Then do you mean," said Clare, coming to his side, and clinging to the strong arm that had so often apparently leaned on this; "oh, you mean that you have no such cousins as you all were at all?"

"None; we're our own cousins," said he, laughing, "and when I told you that I am not what I had been a year ago at one time—for how could I ever forget you? There they are."

"But, Vernon, about this schoolfellow?" said Clare, as they passed out to the hall. He laughed again.

"My mother's name was Poynter certainly. But one word. Lady Aubrey was a stranger till to-day's meeting. Do you know, Clare, you very nearly caught me one day in the drawing-room with Nero. I had to make a leap to gain the sofa."

"Poor fellow! What a lot of trouble you have taken to get such a worthless rebel as I am."

The arrival of the guests arrested the lover's gallant reply, and as Lady Aubrey embraced her beautiful daughter, she whispered,—

"And I forgive, too, dear."

"Ah, mother, but it was such a dangerous experiment."

So it had been, but Lady Aubrey answered, "Isn't he worth it, though, dear, for himself alone?"

"Yes—ah! yes."

A few months later there was a grand wedding at Aubrey Court, and if Clare Aubrey had been the fashion of one season, handsome Vernon Westcliffe's beautiful wife was the rage of the next.

But he often laughs and whispers in her ear,—

"But no more, darling, are you a Dangerous Rebel."

[THE END.]

A RELIC of the great naturalist Humboldt has been placed in the Berlin Botanical Museum—the cane which he used in all his travels. It is made of common oak, with a bent crook, and is decidedly the worse for wear.

GOOD EATING and GOOD WRITING.—In old monastic days good eating was under a ban. It was imagined that the brain could be kept clear and vigorous on a low diet. Romantic young ladies in our time love to think of their favourite authors as fed on a divine ambrosia. It brings them down to a common level to associate them with roast beef and mutton. Poor Charlotte Brontë was once disenchanted of her hero-worship. Thackeray was her favourite author, and in her lonely home on the moors her imagination invested him with all ideal graces. On a visit to London she was lifted to the summit of happiness by an invitation to a dinner where Thackeray was to be one of the guests. She was introduced to the great man, and sat next to him. It was a red-letter day in her life, and memory was on the alert to retain all his bright sayings and report them to her sisters. Thackeray, however, did little talking and much eating. He had recently recovered from a severe attack of typhoid fever, which left him with a ravenous appetite, while the dinner was exceptionally good. Charlotte looked on in wonder at his feats, and the surprise gradually changed to disgust. One more idol had turned to clay. If she had known the modern law of the conservation of forces, her charity might not have failed her.

DREGS AND FROTH.

A STORY OF TO-DAY.

PART II.

CHAPTER XVIII. (continued.)

SIR JOHN WEELDON had been on the road an hour or more and the deepening gloom was rendering surrounding objects obscure, when he said to the driver:—

"The sea is on our left, I think; we are nearer to it than we were?"

"Ees, sur."

"Do you know a narrow bye-road somewhere hereabouts leading down to the shore where some fishermen's cottages stand, close under the cliff?"

The driver had driven that road for years and resided in its neighbourhood all his life, but he knew nothing of such cottages.

Presently, rattling and jolting and singing a song in stentorian tones, Owen Jenkins came along in his little rudely-made market-cart. He shouted to a wild tune:—

"Lay all your injuns idle stan,
Lay 'em to work be foun,
Doant lay a kibbal down a shaft,
Nor lay a whem go roun."

"Holloa there!" cried the alderman.

"Good-evenin' to ee, sur," cried Owen, pulling up as the chaise-driver also did.

"Are we far from the road which leads down to some little fishermen's cottages under the cliff? Do you know them?"

"Knaaw them!" laughed Owen. "Aw, yes! shud think a deed, sur! Aw just coam from 'em—'tes more nor a hundred yards on theer to the left."

"Do the Jenkinse—John, William, and Mary Ann—still live there?"

"Ees, thank God!" said Owen, laughing again.

"Thank you."

"Good evenin', sur. Good evenin'."

So the brothers met and parted for the first time in their lives.

"Do you know that merry young man?" asked the alderman.

"Ees—he be Faarmer Jenkens, sure," replied the driver.

"Jenkins!"

"Ees, sur; Jenkens."

"He seems happy enough," sighed the alderman, and then asked: "Are there many of that name here?"

"Noa, sur; I oany knaws that 'un."

"Ah! drive on faster—its getting late."

The road, growing narrower, brought them back to the broad waste of moorland they had passed in coming. Wrapped in a damp, heavy mist, with ghastly rain-pools, and gleaming here and there through furze and gorse, like watching eyes, it looked far more wildly dreary and melancholy than it did by day.

"Is that somebody over yonder in the darkness?—I thought I saw a lantern."

"Whear, sur?" asked the driver, as if with reluctance, looking in quite another direction.

"Why there; you're not looking, man."

"Doant 'es mind un, sur—'tes a pixey, may be."

The alderman laughed quietly, for the man's reply recalled the dread he had in his childhood of these fairy lights, the wild Jack-o'-lanterns of the moor—one of which he now recognized—the moving bluish white light carried so rapidly towards them by its invisible bearer. It passed them soon after so closely that he could almost have thrust his hand into it.

Presently they reached the bye-road Owen had spoken of; and the alderman said to the driver, "Stop here—I want to walk down to the shore and look at the sea by moonlight—wait till I come back."

He got down, and following the narrow freakishly-winding and twisting road until it degenerated into a mere track, soon found himself amongst rocks and crags, and brought towards

the sea—the noise of which grew louder and louder as he walked onward.

It surprised him to find the place so well remembered, so changed, yet the same—that which was a long way seeming a short way, and the familiar objects he met being smaller and much closer together than he thought they were.

Scrambling down over the crackling and slippery masses of sea-weed, he obtained an uninterrupted view of the sea shimmering in the moonlight, with the ragged fringe of the night's dark mantle above the line of the horizon. Looking up he saw, with a strange thrill, the little group of cottages huddled together upon their rocky ledge—with piles of driftwood and heaps of shell-fish, and long kitchen gardens, and tumble-down sheds and outhouses, all as unchanged as if he were still the little brown-faced, bare-footed urchin, and yonder thatched cottage was still his home.

Slowly and cautiously he made his way up in the black shadow under the cliff, and listening first for some minutes outside his father's cottage, stealthily raised the latch of the oaken door and entered.

Nothing new—nothing changed. Standing there in the dark he took out his pocket-book, and placed upon the table the letter containing the bank-notes. Then as quietly as he had come he went.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN the driver of the chaise from Wauceston watched the alderman passing rapidly out of sight along the rough narrow cart-road leading to the sea, he wondered greatly at his temerity, muttered an oath, and said emphatically that it was "gashly!"

In vague terror of fire-breathing, dandy-hounds and mischief-working pixies, he was driving over the moorland as fast as he could go, when the alderman pulled him up and sent a thrill of superstitious terror through him by requesting him to stay there while he went away up to the top of the cliff, and have a look at the sea by night.

The idea was terrible! To remain there alone!

The vague at once became real, every dimly-visible object began to assume a suspicious form, every motion the wind created seemed that of some treacherous invisible supernatural enemy, every sound was unaccountably strange. And the air was full of sounds—low-whispering sounds that seemed to intensify rather than break the deep oppressive silence of the night—

"Undescribed sounds
That come a-swooning over hollow ground,
And wither drearily on barren moors"

mingling with the faint, low, hoarse and barely audible murmur of the distant sea.

Estranged from his fellows, isolated from humanity, and consequently at the mercy of all sorts of uncanny beings, the deserted chaise-driver who, as he often said, for "a fear wrastle wouldn't shaw auld Nick es baack," was utterly helpless and forlorn. He looked apprehensively in every direction, and listened in tremulous expectancy, full of terror.

"Whist! Whist!" he muttered, and stroking the back and side of his restless beast with the long whip-handle, added, "So as I poor Sonney, art her pixey-laden?" and again as he glanced sullenly in the direction Sir John had taken, "I shaan't be in no poor fur to goo a drivin' you agen, stranger."

Breaking out into impatient threatening, he presently remarked,—

"Thee'd better be queek, I can tell un." And again, fiercely, a little later, "thee'd better not be kepen' me waaitin'—if un do un want fine me heer wen un comes."

Half-an-hour crept by so wearily that it seemed an age.

Suddenly a startling sound swept upwards—a wild cry that out the air like an arrow in its swiftest flight—a shriek of sudden agony and despair making the driver's blood run cold.

It ceased, and he seemed to hear more distinctly than before all those small fearful noises of the

moorland and the night, the low hissing, the faint weak voice-like murmurings, the tiny gurgling noises, the ghostly laughing and chattering, and sounds as of some unseen creature's breathing!

The cry he had heard was low and far off, but clear and distinct. It came from the sea! The poor frightened fellow's face changed colour; he stood up, trembling, with mouth and eyes widely opened.

"What wor thaat?" he gasped.

Again he heard or thought he heard the same sound, but fainter and seemingly farther away, and then it came again, if possible, still fainter. "The daandy-hounds!" he cried, in horror, "the daandy-hounds! they're a-bunting of un!" He threw down the reins, leaped to the ground, hurriedly slipped off his oil-skin cape, turned it the dry side out, put it on the wet side within, as a charm against supernatural evil, and then regathering the reins, remounted in a dreadful state of trepidation.

Glancing rapidly before and behind, from right to left, and peering with intense anxiety into the darkness that curtained the road where he last saw Sir John, he raised the whip, stood up to strike his horse, and after a moment's pause flogged and rattled away, never drawing rein until he reached the stable of the inn at Wauceston. There he at last felt that he was amongst fellow-creatures, and safe from supernatural pursuers.

"Aw cudn't staan 'et any longer!" he said afterwards.

I must now take you back to the alderman.

When Sir John came out of his parent's cottage his thoughts were full of a tenderness beguiling of remorse. It seemed such a miserable home; and however coarse and rough its inmates might be, still, after all, they were his father and mother. He ought to have done something for them before, so he thought.

The village was in its infancy when he last saw it, now it was growing up; the four huts had become ten cottages, a wooden railing guarded the edge of the cliff, sheds had been built. He walked through it very slowly, noting these and other changes. How dark it was there in the great cliffs' overreaching blackness. It was like walking in the valley of the shadow of death.

The wind was soft and its voice was low, and it seemed to caress and whisper to him, sorrowfully. The roar and crash of the breakers in the thick darkness below were like half familiar, half forgotten voices that he had known in another life. The years that had passed since he last heard them grew dim and distant as the scenes and sounds he stood amongst grew more and more familiar. His childhood was coming back to him, and his heart was softened by his memories.

"I wonder," thought Sir John, "where all my little playmates are now. What fun it was when we were splashing and dashing in the water, or gathering sea-weed, or leaping from rock to rock in the little bay; are they all alive? How many of them are still here? The boys and girls who knew me are men and women now, and have boys and girls of their own. I should like to do something for them, before I die; or in my will."

He began to devise a plan for purchasing Miss Tregarthen's portrait of his mother. He eyed the cottages in which the men and women who were his playmates might be living; and wished he could look upon them without awakening them, and try to recall their faces to his mind.

He remembered, as he passed under the bestling cliff, through that deep solemn gloom which he had likened to death's shadow, seeing his mother with her legs bared to above the knees rushing into the water to aid in shoving off his father's boat. His mother! He had seen her clambering the steep wriggling way up the cliff with a load of fish upon her brawny back that a horse might shrink from. His mother! scorched by summer suns, shivering in the icy blasts, with hands of iron-like hardness and limbs—like the limbs of a labouring man. His mother! How

could he acknowledge her? How dare he! And yet his conscience rebuked him. He ought to have done something for her before now. She had a rosy healthy complexion and bright black eyes, and a smile that was full of love and tenderness. He remembered so much directly he looked on Miss Tregarthen's canvas. She was fond of him, too, and might have insisted upon living with him, or at the best, of coming to see him often. No! he could not, dared not, make himself known.

So he stole from his father's door with the stealthy air of a shame-faced thief rather than that of an honest man visiting the home of his childhood.

He remembered as one of his favourite haunts the little nature-formed harbour in which the fishing smacks used to lie at anchor, shut in from the open sea by encircling rocks. It was only a little way to the right of the village. He looked at his watch. The hour was not a very late one, and he would like to see the dear old spot once more, for it had been the scene of many a childish joy and daring adventure. He seemed, moreover, to remember it so well that he was curious to test the fidelity of his memory—to compare the picture in his imagination with the reality.

"A few minutes will take me to it," he muttered, as he strode back, and passing downward instead of upward, found the broad grass-grown ledge projecting from the face of the cliff growing narrower and more irregular, assuming the form of steps, until at last he could reach the shore only by scrambling and jumping.

The blackness of the cliff's huge shadow was here most intense, making the moon's light upon the sea and clouds, weak and misty as it was, almost dazzling by contrast.

The tide was coming in fast, and he ventured out to meet it, stepping carefully from one mass of slippery stone to another. The depths between were filled with beds of black, dimly glistening sea-weed, looking like heap of writhing snakes.

He presently stood far out from the cliff—a dark lonely figure against the moonlight on the sea, the wind gently fluttering his coat skirts, and toying with his hair.

There was something awful in the aspect and sentiments of this and wild gloomy region, in the mystic obscurity of the sickly moon, and the faintly twinkling stars; in the watery plain stretching so far away towards the horizon, a vast expanse to be so utterly void of human life; in the loneliness and desertion of the little bay, with its abandoned boats and its chaotic heaps and shattered fragments of broken rock; in the sable pall overhead; in the din and tumult of the surging waters below, seething, writhing and leaping, as if in fury and torment; in the mighty cliffs, and in that darkness of night, death and eternal desolation, which was their shadow.

He watched the giant waves as they rolled onward and upward, rank over rank, subsiding into foam, which rushing to the shore swept in and out and about the great boulders and rocks as if in furious search for some hidden or escaping enemy, tossing the weeds aside in angry impatience, and whirling and hungrily leaping about that mass of granite on which the alderman was standing.

The influence of these things stole into his heart and mind, stirring the odd fancies and superstitions of his boyhood into new being. Were the stars that glimmered so high above this world, which is so small to them, so great to us, watching him? Was it their weird influence which had drawn him to a spot he never intended to look upon again? Was it indeed possible to read up there, as in a book, the destiny of every human being? Could they show him his future?

He smiled pensively, and looking down again, there somehow fell upon him a childish terror of the sea. The breakers beyond the little harbour looked as greedily cruel as they did to him so many years ago when his father took him down to see them in the night, when he clung about his neck, and began to cry,

Beyond where he stood and farther out, but still within that death-like shadow of the cliff there was a pile of rocks from which the village on the cliff was visible. Before he went back to the chaise he determined to visit and have a parting glance at his father's cottage from that point of view.

He reached it with difficulty and in some trepidation, drenched with spray.

The task, he was proud to remember, was one that he accomplished when he was but a little boy.

"I must have been a plucky one, even then," said he.

He gazed upward to the face of the cliff, and peering into its dense shadow could just make out the cottages; and select from them his father's.

"And to think that such a place was once my home!"

How strange it was to contrast with that wretched home the stateliness and wealth of his London mansion. His heart glowed and expanded as he thought of all he had accomplished since he lived there, of triumphs past and triumphs yet to come. Again the future opened before him, glorious in its crowning promise. Absorbed in its contemplation he took a step backwards, staggered—fell!

A wild shriek of terror stifled by the hungry water, another fainter and less distinct as he arose and battled with the waves, swept backward, thrown upward, east forward, another fainter still, which pierced the air as he was again caught up and whirled onward.

He saw the huge waves uprising which bore him back into the black shadow of death, and with a last cry of despair and agony, looked into its cavernous grave-like hollow, seeing therein, as on a mirror, his wife's upbraiding melancholy eyes changing to their flash of angry fire as they changed when he last saw her, with her shorn hair at her feet. There, too, was the face of his mother looking out upon him reproachfully, from Miss Tregarthen's canvas; scenes of suffering when a miserable little tramp on the road to London, and a starving vagrant in its streets; a scene of never-surpassed delight when little Jemmy Benny gave him a meal and promised him work; scenes of humble domestic happiness and peace; scenes of his greatest triumphs and glory, speaking as a Member in the Court of Common Council; as Alderman, as Sheriff, as a Member of Parliament, as a Queen-made Knight, all coming in a sudden flash, and all together, and yet each one distinct and clear—a living picture of the past.

And then a crash and utter endless darkness! And there, where he had played as a child, close beside the cottage he was born in, battered and bruised, out and torn, was all that remained of the mighty Sir John Weeldon.

The ashy grey light which stole through the cold white mist and dark blue of the horizon, and the golden and crimson glow of summer sunrise when the waves rose and fell in their burnished glory, rested upon the lifeless form, lifted and lowered, swayed to and fro, or rolling over and over, as the waves made it their ghastly plaything.

The lank black hair floated now over and now from the white face, and the arms moving, as if in the impulses of oratory, were swayed and tossed in grim mockery of the life and passionate feeling which had gone out from them for ever.

At last, travelling with the tide the head became jammed into the fissure of a rock, and there remained immovable, the face uppermost—the open eyes blindly looking their last in death, as they had looked their last in life, upon the very spot where they first opened to receive the light of day.

(To be continued.)

"Yes," said Fogg, "I used to believe everything; was the most credulous fellow alive. But," he added, "since I have had this confounded sore throat it is hard for me to swallow anything."

FACETIÆ.

THE best thing in bonnets continues to be, as in the past, a pretty face.

AN only child is a single heir (singular) occurrence. (Oh!).

THE fly is a happy thing, and goes about trying to tickle everybody.

"WHAT is that man yelling at?" inquired Tommy of his younger brother. "At the top of his voice," replied the little one.

IF a man really wants to know of how little importance he is, let him go with his wife to the dressmaker's.

A SUNDAY-SCHOOL boy upon being asked what made the tower of Pisa lean, replied: "Because of the famine in the land."

"HOW greedy you are!" said one little girl to another, who had taken the best apple in the dish; "I was going to take that."

A DRESDEN watchmaker has made a watch out of paper. If the paper is like some we know of, it will not run after three months.

"PULVERIZED meat" is what the Belgian Government is about to give out for army rations. This must be Belgian for "hash."

"A REPUTATION," says Josh Billings, "once broken may possibly be repaired, but the world will always keep their eyes on the spot where the crack was."

A FRENCH writer says there was once in the environs of Rouen a miller's daughter so pretty and so cruel that the sighs of her lovers alone served to turn the sails of her father's mill.

A TALL man applied for a position as overseer. "What do you know?" he was asked. "I don't know anything," he replied; "but I'm tall enough to look over all the men you've got."

"YES," said the farmer, "wire fences are expensive, but the men don't stop and rest for five minutes, on the top of it, every time they have to climb it."

PREACHER (arriving drenched)—"What shall I do, Mrs. McGregor? I am wet through and through." Old Scotch Woman—"Get into the pulpit as sure as ye can. Ye'll be dry eno' there."

"STUDENT" wants to know what kind of a bird was the dodo? From the fact that the species is entirely extinct, we suppose it was the fabled spring chicken, of which we still hear so often, and see so never.

"HAVE you had your ears pierced?" asked a young lady of her chum, who lived next door. "I should think so," was the crushing reply, "hearing you sing every day." There is now a great gulf of coldness between the two.

"WHAT building is that?" asked a stranger of a boy, pointing to the schoolhouse. "That," said the boy—"why, that's a tannery!" And he feelingly rubbed his back as he passed on.

NEAR-SIGHTED.—An Irishman, who was very near-sighted, about to fight a duel, insisted that he should stand six paces nearer to his antagonist than the other did to him, and they were both to fire at the same time.

"YES, judge," said a prisoner, "I admit that the back of my trousers were tangled in the dog's teeth, and that I dragged the animal away, but if you call that stealing a dog no man on earth is safe from committing crime."

"WHAT have you been doing since I last saw you?" "I've been attending a course of free lectures." "A course of free lectures?" "Yes, I was married a week after we parted."

"THEN you are paying attention to old Grinder's daughter, are you, my son?" "Yes, mother; I have waited upon Miss Grinder somewhat. She's a nice sort of girl; father's got money." "Precious little good that'll do you, my son! he's the closest man in these parts." "But you know, mother, he can't live

for ever, and—" "Don't you be too sure. I've known old Grinder for forty years and he hasn't died yet." This set the young man to thinking.

A WITNESS under cross-examination, who had been tortured by a lawyer for several hours, at last asked for a glass of water. "There," said the judge, "I think you had better let the witness go now, as you have pumped him dry."

THEY were approaching a confectioner's, and she said: "Oh, Charlie, I'm going to have my new dress cut bias! Oh—oo—there's a confectioner's! Goody!" "Yes, and it is like your new dress, for it will be cut by us." And the horrid wretch led the panting damsel across the street.

COOK: "Madam, may I ask you for a character?" Mistress: "What do you expect me to write, you worthless creature? Surely, you can't expect me to say that I am satisfied with you!" Cook: "Isn't necessary. Only write that I remained with you six months. That will be my best recommendation."

A GOOD STRANGER.—Was there ever a better example of the witty and concise form of expression than the answer of the grim man who, when asked about the character of a neighbour, sententiously replied: "Mister, I don't know very much about him, but my impression is he'd make a first-class stranger."

"Sir," said a little blustering man to a religious opponent, "to what sect do you belong?" "Well, I don't exactly know," replied his opponent, "but to judge from your size, appearance and constant buzzing, I should think you belonged to the class generally called insect."

WE have great sympathy for the bachelor, who, when dying, left all his property to three ladies who had refused all his offers of marriage. "Nobody can tell," he whispered, "how much those ladies have contributed to my happiness."

CULTURE.—"But you know, pa," said the farmer's daughter, when he spoke to her about the addresses of a neighbour's son, "that ma wants me to marry a man of culture." "So do I, my dear, so do I, and there is no better culture in the country than agriculture."

MISS MOIRE'S HIT.—Miss Brown, who is no longer young, was chiding Miss Moire for her foolishness in carrying a parasol, which Miss Brown said was useless, and a piece of affectation. "I never carry a parasol," she said. "No," replied Miss Moire; "people on the shady side of life have no use for them."

LAST DROP IN HER CUP OF BITTERNESS.—A young actress had made a signal failure in the first two acts of a comedy. After the third, in which she did not appear, one of her fellow-actors came up to her with much ardour: "Charming! adorable! Your third act quite redeems the other two!"

A PRETENTIOUS person said to the leading man of a country village: "How would a lecture by me on Mount Vesuvius suit the inhabitants of your village?" "Very well, sir; very well, indeed," he answered; "a lecture by you on Mount Vesuvius would suit them a great deal better than a lecture by you in this village."

A POLICE magistrate is questioning a tramp whose bearing indicates that he has seen better days. "You look as if you had been a gentleman," he remarks. "Yes," says the prisoner, with a sigh; "once I was worth a hundred thousand." "Gambled, eh?" "No, sir." "Squandered it in riotous living?" "No, sir." "Then to what vice were you addicted?" "Friendship, sir."

"ONE word more," said a speaker, "and I am done." And the reporter found, when the word was written down, that it contained fifteen hundred syllables. The famous word of Aristophanes was outdone. That same speaker is the fellow who often says "a single remark," and then talks for fifteen minutes.

SOCIETY.

THE Princess of Wales was present at Goodwood every day, and was, as usual, the centre of interest to the great mass of the visitors; whilst the presence of the young and blooming bride of the Earl of March was an additional attraction to those living in the county who were present. Quite a sensation was caused by the splendid *cortège* of the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk, each of the four carriages being drawn by four splendid greys, with outriders on steeds of the same colour.—*World*.

THE Duke of Connaught, with his brigade, will it is stated, go to Cyprus and await orders. His Royal Highness however, wants to prove himself something better than a simple feather-bed soldier, and Sir Garnet has a good opinion of his military qualities; so that if Asiatic does not prematurely accept the conditions rather anxiously nominated by the Government, a member of our reigning family may have a baptism of fire.

At St. George's Church, Hanover-square, were married by special licence, on the 3rd of August, Mr. John Bickersteth, third son of the Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Ripon, and the Lady Margaret Ashburnham, second daughter of the late Earl of Ashburnham. The bride went with her mother, the Countess of Ashburnham, and on alighting was received by her eldest brother and her sister, Lady Mary Ashburnham, her only bridesmaid. The bride's dress was of rich white satin duchesse, draped with Brussels point lace, and fastened with diamond stars; the train was trimmed with bunches of orange blossoms and volants of white satin and Brussels lace. She wore a wreath of orange flowers and a tulle veil, which was attached to the hair by diamond stars. The bridesmaid's dress was of white satin merveilleux, trimmed *en tablier* with garnitures of marguerites, and bonnet to correspond. She wore a gold locket with a marguerite in pearls, the gift of the bridegroom.

At the marriage of Colonel Owen Williams with the youngest daughter of Sir Tollemache Sinclair at St. Peter's, Eaton-square, the Prince of Wales was present, and was one of the attesting witnesses. He also joined the wedding party at 11, Eaton-square, where refreshments were served after the ceremony. The bride's dress was of ivory-brocaded satin, trimmed with Brussels lace and ostrich feathering; the bridesmaids were also in ivory-brocaded satin, draped with Indian muslin; they wore wreaths of pink moss rosebuds with tulle veils, and carried baskets of moss rosebuds. Each wore a diamond fly, the gift of the bridegroom. The Prince of Wales presented the bride with a gold bangle, set with a ruby and sapphire, his Royal Highness's present to the bridegroom being a set of silver dessert dishes.

VISCOUNTESS CONDEMERRE held a small afternoon reception at her house in Belgrave-square on the 27th ult. The rooms were tastefully ornamented with flowers, and the walls with sketches, some by Gustave Doré, and not a few by the hostess. The conservatory looked charming, with its statues, fountains, rare plants, trellis of vines, &c. The tea table was arranged with Dresden china baskets and golden tazzas, Japanese storks peering through a diminutive bower of yellow flowers and green leafage. A carpet of natural roses lay on a table near. The hostess wore an electric-blue satin merveilleux, trimmed with striped watered silk, and veiled by a mantilla of antique Brussels lace; her headdress consisted of a lace cap, embellished with large oriental garnets. The Hon. Mrs. Hunter's toilette was a light mauve cashmere des Indes, trimmed with old-gold satin, draped with deep flowers of Limerick lace; her headdress was lace and ribbon, harmonising with her dress; ornaments of amethysts richly set in gold. Mr. Frank Lincoln, a young American reciter, entertained the guests in the course of the afternoon with clever and humorous imitations. The company was highly distinguished.

STATISTICS.

POST CARDS IN INDIA.—It was not until 1879-80 that post cards were introduced into India, when they acquired an immediate popularity, the number actually carried during the year having been 7,471,983. Newspapers passed through the Indian post-office to the number of 11,251,021, as well as mere than 2,085,000 book and pattern packets, and over 118,000,000 letters.

TELEGRAPH CABLES.—The estimated total length of all the submarine telegraph cables in the world is 62,100 miles, and their money value is computed at £40,000,000. According to the estimates of a French statistician, the total length of all the telegraph wires at present laid is sufficient to reach forty-six times around the world.

THE BRITISH FLEET.—The total number of ironclads, and wooden, iron, and composite vessels actually built from 1865-66 to 1881-82 in Her Majesty's dockyards and by contract amounted to 322,952 tons, of the value of £15,174,690. The smallest quantity of shipping built in any one year during that period was 13,566 tons in 1866-67, and the largest quantity in the year following, when 27,423 tons were built. The greatest value represented by the shipping constructed in one year was in 1876-77, when £1,423,419 were expended in the construction of 24,230 tons of shipping, principally composite vessels.

GEMS.

ONE who is never busy can never enjoy rest, for rest implies relief from previous labour.

HAPPINESS consists not in possessing much, but in being content with what we possess.

EXPERIENCE is a trophy composed of all the weapons we have been wounded with.

A WANT of cleanliness injures not only the purity of the body, but that of the soul itself.

SYSTEMATIZE your business, and keep an eye on little expenses. Small leaks sink great ships.

He who labours with the mind governs others; he who labours with the body is governed by others.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

NOTEAU.—Infuse half-a-pound of apricot kernels and same quantity of cherry kernels in a quart of brandy. Stir from time to time for three weeks; then pour off the liquid from the kernels. Melt two pounds of lump sugar in a quart of water. Mix all together, and filter.

ELDER FLOWER WINE.—Whisk six whites of eggs in six gallons of cold, fresh, spring water, and add sixteen pounds of loaf sugar. Boil it up, and skim. Put to the still boiling liquid eight pounds of the best raisins chopped, and a quarter of a peck of elder flowers, but only infuse the elder flowers. Do not continue boiling on any account whatever. When cool, put a quarter of a pint of yeast to the liquid, stirring it thoroughly. The next day add the juice and thin rind of four whole lemons. Let the whole ferment in an open vessel for three days; then strain and cork it.

TORRES.—Take one breakfast-cupful of rich cream (if slightly sour it would be just as good, or better), one breakfast cupful of pounded white sugar, pour the above into a very clean copper saucepan, and boil slowly over a clear but not too hot fire. The mixture will first become quite liquid, and will afterwards gradually thicken; when almost done pour in one dessertspoonful of essence of vanilla and one of whisky. When the mixture becomes very frothy, and leaves the sides of the pan clean, pour it out as quickly as possible on to a flat buttered dish. It should set at once.

MISCELLANEOUS.

EGYPTIANS who died 2,000 years ago are, it is said, now being converted into paint. They make very superior burnt sienna, which London painters are willing to pay a good price for.

THE triumph of a woman lies not in the admiration of her lover, but in the respect of her husband, and that can only be gained by a constant cultivation of those qualities which she knows he most values.

A ROWING trip from Rome to Paris is now being attempted by two Italian carmen in an outrigger. After crossing the Mediterranean, they intend to row up the Rhone to its junction with the Saone, thence to follow the latter river into the canal uniting the Saone with the Seine, and so reach Paris.

If we are asked what is the one thing which, more than any, is the basis of true self-respect, our answer would be, work. We do not see how any idle person can respect himself. An idle person may be proud, he may be vain, he may be arrogant, but as self-respect is the parent of all manly enterprise, so is idleness the parent of all vice.

CETEWAYO, the ex-King of the Zulus, arrived at Plymouth on the 3rd of August from Capetown, after a protracted passage. Cetewayo is accompanied by his cousin Ungemgewana, and also by two councillors. The ex-king's personal suite consists of a native interpreter and a native doctor, and two native servants. Mr. H. C. Shepstone has come to represent the Natal Government. The party left Capetown in the *Arab* on July 12. The voyage was occasionally stormy, especially between Madeira and Plymouth. Cetewayo and his companions are nearly black, but their features are more refined than those of negroes. The party are unaccompanied by women. The *Arab* afterwards proceeded for Southampton.

A SMILE.—Who can tell the value of a smile? It costs the giver nothing, but is beyond price to the erring and relenting, the sad and cheerless, the lost and forsaken. It disarms malice, subdues temper, turns hatred to love, revenge to kindness, and paves the darkest path with gems of sunlight. A smile on the brow betrays a kind heart, a pleasant friend, an affectionate brother, a dutiful son, a happy husband. It adds a charm to beauty, it decorates the face of the deformed, and makes lovely woman an angel of paradise.

A GOOD WIFE.—Without her, a young man is but half armed for life's battles. Therefore go and propose to the most sensible girl you know. If she accepts you, tell her how much your income is, and from what source derived; and tell her you will divide the last shilling with her, and that you will love her with all your heart into the bargain. And then keep your promise. My word for it, she will live within your income, and to your last hour you will regret that you did not marry sooner. Stop worrying about feminine extravagance and feminine untruth. Just you be true to her—love her sincerely, and a more fond, faithful, slave you will never meet anywhere. You will not deserve her, I know; but she will never know it.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES.—How lamentable that we should go through the world so misunderstanding one another; letting slip golden opportunities for glimpses into men's better nature, which might have knit our heart to theirs for ever in a brotherhood of love, and drawn the veil of charity over faults which, in our blindness, seemed to us without a virtue to balance them. Angels turn sorrowing away from this soul-blindness of ours, and fiends laugh over the final fall of despair which our helping hand might, at such moments, have averted. Well for us all it is that He who is Himself without sin, more merciful than man, sees gathering tears in eyes that we deem hard and dry.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. W. (Lingfield).—We are not aware whether the artist is yet living, but will inquire for you. The best way to dispose of the picture would be to take it to a thoroughly well known dealer, such as Mr. Agnew, or place it in the hands of Messrs. Christie, Manson, and Wood, auctioneers.

E. D. (Luton).—The following has been recommended as a poison for Crickets:—Mix some honey with a little white arsenic; spread it on scraps of paper and lay about near their haunts, but be very careful not to let any children get hold of it. Pieces of unlacqued lime may also, with good results, be put into the holes they inhabit.

JUNBO.—At any bird-fancier's.

TROUBLED KITTY.—It is news to us that nurses in Lunatic Asylums are thought evil of. Their work is arduous and responsible, as well as singularly trying, and where performed, as it is in many cases, with gentle patience, deserving of the highest praise and encouragement. 2. Ridiculing the afflicted and telling untruths are certainly no attributes to be expected or approved in a minister of religion. 3. Jealousy is so unreasonable and unreasoning that it is impossible to assign grounds for any particular instance without knowing all the circumstances.

SCB.—Will be glad if any of our readers will say how deer-grease and rum may be mixed so as to form a pomade.

BESS.—The rose is hardly and really ever-blooming. The Marshal Neli is only a half-hardy bush, but is a true monthly. There is a long line of ever-bloomers that are hardy—that is, will stand out in the open ground all winter and not be frost-killed.

FREDIE.—There is no harm in kissing your cousins, if they do not object to it. Gentlemen sometimes have an inch-wide, or inch-and-a-half-wide, satin ribbon inside their hats, diagonally across the crown, embroidered with the name or initials of owner. As the lady has promised you any piece of embroidery you ask for, upon the condition you make a personal use of it, why not ask for an embroidered hat ribbon? Tell her, or show her, how it is to be placed, and leave the selection of colour, and name or initials, to her.

NINETTE.—It is no uncommon thing to see quite young men becoming bald. We much question the efficacy of any of the advertised lotions, unguents and excipients.

AURORA.—Thanks for your very cheery letter. We are never "bothered" by inquiries—especially those which we feel are "made in earnest."

R. J. F.—The lady should have introduced the gentleman to both the lady and gentleman if she introduced either; but under the circumstances an introduction was not at all necessary. We think the lady should have merely bowed to the gentleman when he entered the omnibus, and then gone on with her conversation with the friends in whose company she was. She owes an apology to the first gentleman.

A. R. M.—When a gentleman is "keeping company" with a young lady, and he or she goes away from town for a time, the gentleman will ask the lady to correspond with him; the one will write the first letter that goes away, especially if they do not quite know the address, but ordinarily the first letter should be written by the gentleman, and he should always be the one to solicit a correspondence.

LESLIE.—1. If a friend asks you for a letter of introduction, be sure to give it unsealed, because he might desire to know what are its contents, and he should be at liberty to ascertain them. 2. Always write such a letter upon the best note-paper, and use an envelope to correspond; and of a fashionable size and shape. 3. Attention to these trifles is not only desirable, but also respectable.

ASNEY.—1. In writing letters to even the most intimate friends, one needs to exercise the utmost caution in expressing one's sentiments and opinions. 2. Of all things on earth to make trouble, commend us to a letter. You write as you would say it, but it goes to your friend without the grace of a voice, the inflection, the gesture, the laugh that would make a joke of it.

DEMY.—Flirtation comes under the head of morals more than of manners; still it may be said that ball-room flirtation, being more open, is less dangerous than any other. Yet we do not believe that a really good girl, or one with a thorough knowledge of good breeding, and possessing any degree of common sense, will flirt at any time or at any place.

AURORA.—After an introduction has taken place, the introducer should stay for a few minutes, at least, with his friends, and if there are any incidents which would interest either party known to the other, or there are mutual acquaintances between them, they should be mentioned so as to give subjects for conversation.

L. B. V.—1. At an evening visit or entertainment, if the invited person departs before the usual and specified hour, he and she should omit formal adieus. 2. To be ostentatious is a positive proof of vulgarity, and foolish lavishness stands as an undoubted witness to the fact that an abundant possession is a recent acquirement.

ALTON D.—1. Oysters in the shells are served before the soup, if at all, and they can be put in place before the guests are summoned. 2. Sometimes the plates of soup are put upon the table before the guests are seated, and, when only one servant is employed, this is a very good plan to adopt.

W. M.—A lady should not refuse to be introduced to a gentleman at a private ball. At a public ball she will use her discretion, and she can with propriety refuse any introduction.

M. U.—If there has been no wedding breakfast, and a reception follows the return of the couple to town, even though the young people take possession of their own house, the mother of the bride usually gives one to them first. She sends out notes or large cards.

P. R.—The lady is not obliged to invite her escort to enter the house when he accompanies her home, and if invited he should decline the invitation. But he should request permission to call the next day or evening, which will be true politeness.

W. D.—It is customary for the gentleman who is the head of the household, in the ordinary family circle, to sit at the head of the table.

EMMA J.—1. In receiving guests, your first object should be to make them feel perfectly at home. Bugging them to do so will not suffice, as you should display a genuine, unaffected friendliness. Allow their presence to interfere as little as possible with your domestic arrangements, for by so doing you show them that their presence does not disturb you, but, on the contrary, falls, as it were, into a vacant place in your household. 2. In selecting your dresses, have a correct eye to suitable colours for your complexion. If you do not possess an aptitude in this respect, you should never rely upon your own judgment, but upon that of some intimate friend possessing that requisite.

FIRELY.—1. If you are engaged to one gentleman it is not at all proper to be seen promenading with another. It is very apt to engender feelings of jealousy in the breast of your future husband, and may cause a rupture between you which may never be satisfactorily adjusted. 2. We can see no objection to a young lady who is heart-free corresponding with a gentleman friend. 3. Perhaps the reason of your lover's prolonged silence may be sickness. After leaving the city he may have been stricken with some malady which has rendered it impossible for him to communicate with you or his mother. In the meantime do not allow his unwonted silence to disquiet you, as doubtless you will soon hear from him.

HARVEST MOON.

Under the green old elm trees
The harvest hands are at rest,
Some smoking their pipes, some sleeping,
Some laughing and telling jests.

Afar in the brooding sunshine
The new-mown meadow lies,
Its fragrant low-cut grasses
Looking up at the summer skies.

Beyond, in the clover pasture,
The lazy cows and sheep
Have crept to the spreading beeches
To take their moonday sleep.

Within the cool wide porches
The tidy housemaid sines
As she clears away the tables
The harvest labour brings.

Oh, bright the day and noontide,
And sweet the new-mown hay,
And blessed be the brawny arms
That rake and store it away!

A. C. M.

W. H.—1. The colour of the hair sent is very apparent. A person possessing the hair, skin, and eyes referred to would be considered pretty by admirers of that style of beauty, while others again might think different. 2. Your writing is very good, although it does not display enough freedom of hand, being rather cramped. 3. A dictionary is a work giving information on any science or head, and is absolutely necessary for the acquisition of knowledge.

TOM R.—1. If you are not able to marry at the present time you should inform your lady-love of the fact, and if she sees proper to wait until your financial standing improves all will and good; but it is rather selfish for a young man to ask such a favour, thus debaring the lady from improving her opportunity when it presents itself. She may have to wait many years before you will be so situated as to warrant marriage. 2. Your height is about the average. 3. We can see no objection to your attendance as an escort to your lady friend at the wedding breakfast.

MILLY.—I. H. S. stands for *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, Jesus, Saviour of men.

SOUND.—The stain left upon a spoon by a soft boiled egg may be removed by rubbing a little moistened salt upon the place with the finger, until it is bright again.

D. J.—Of the English-speaking people, 13,500,000 are Roman Catholics, and 59,000,000 Protestants. It is the "Latin races" that are most strongly Catholics—Italians, French, Spaniards, and Portuguese.

MISS MOLLY.—When herbs are to be kept for flavouring dishes, it is most important that they should be gathered at the proper time and dried in the best manner. Basil should be gathered from the middle of August to the middle of September; marjoram, during the month of July; thyme, during the months of June and July; sage, August and September; mint, the latter end of June and throughout July. The best rule to follow in this respect is to gather the herbs when they first blossom, on a dry day, before the sun has been long on them. Dry them gradually on a warm stove, after which they may be tied up in bags made of old newspapers. Another mode is to pick off the leaves, and pound them in a mortar, pass through a hair-sieve, and preserve the powders in a well-stoppered bottle.

MINNIE.—The letters I, N, R, I. on the cross stand for Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. In the Roman (Latin) alphabet I and J are the same, as in old English V and U were alike.

SOPHIA.—It is not necessary to cease going to see the mother of the young gentleman if she is your friend; but if he is rude or seems offended at you, try and not go there when he is at home. Avoid him and only treat him with cold politeness. Do not assume any authority over him. It is not becoming in you to read him a lecture for his bad habits. Leave that for others—his relatives.

ELLEN JANE.—It is a good rule for the husband to be older than his wife, since it seems best for him to be the stronger, wiser, and more experienced in the lifelong partnership. But, as neither wisdom nor strength can be wholly measured by years, this rule should certainly not be an imperative one. Where the attachment between the parties is strong and sincere, and the disparity of years no greater than in your case, it would be asking too much of human nature to expect friendly advice to prevent the match.

ALADDIN.—You are no gentleman if you do not immediately apologise. The lady was right and you wrong. A gentleman would never take a liberty with a lady, and she was justified in resenting what she knew was improper, and might justly deem insulting. The "Laughing Plant" is so called because, when eaten, its effects are like those of "laughing gas"—exciting and exhilarating, causing the eater to laugh, sing and dance wildly. About an hour's deep sleep follows, after which the person has no remembrance of his ridiculous behaviour. Shakespeare's "Tempest" is rarely put upon the stage on account of the difficulty of "mounting" it properly.

J. R. B.—Do not allow any third party to come between you two. A little concession may assure you an influence that will be a source of great pleasure to both.

JUVENIA.—Academy was originally the name of a pleasure-ground near Athens, and is said to have derived its name from Academus, a local hero at the time of the Trojan war. Its shady walks became the favourite resort of Plato, and it was here that he lectured to his pupils and friends. From this circumstance, the school of philosophers, which he founded, was called the "Academic School," or merely the "Academy." During the middle ages the term was seldom applied to institutions of learning; but in the fifteenth century, after the revival of classical studies, it again became frequent.

GRACE F.—No harm can come of your mentioning the matter to the young man's mother, but, as she has no control over him, what good will it do? Your proper course is to show the person a cool indifference that will express your opinion of his conduct. You can "retaliate" in no other way.

LAL.—A griffon is a species of vulture found in the mountainous parts of Europe, North Africa, and Turkey. In heathen mythology the griffon is an animal with the body of a lion and head and wings of an eagle. Of course no such creature ever existed any more than the fabled minotaur and centaur, or the winged dragon.

MADOK.—To wear six rings upon your hands at once is very like "a show." It is vulgar to wear a great deal of jewellery at one time. Three rings are quite enough.

TIM. N.—You should ask the formal consent of your future wife's parents without delay. They must be very good-natured people to receive you as favourably as they have under the circumstances.

LESLIE. J.—April 26th, 1880, came on Friday, but don't let the fact that Friday is said to be an "unlucky" day destroy your peace of mind.

FUZLED.—We do not know in what sense you refer to the word "ambrosia." It is the name of a delicious dessert made of alternate layers of sliced orange and grated cocoanut, well sugared with powdered sugar. The cocoanut forms the last layer, and sometimes a glass of sherry is poured over all. The dictionary meaning of "ambrosia" is "the food of the gods, which conferred upon those who partook of it eternal youth. It was also used by the gods to anoint their bodies and hair." Also "ambrosia" is the botanical name applied to a certain genus of plants, including some coarse and worthless weeds.

ASPIRANTS.—*Vignette* is the same word as *vignette*. Vignette originally meant a running ornament of vine-leaves and tendrils. Then it was applied to the first capital letter of manuscript books because this was frequently ornamented with flourishes like vine-branches or tendrils; then the word came to mean any ornament or flourish put by printers at the top or bottom of a page; and finally it got its present meaning of a small wood-cut or engraving of any kind, placed on the page, without any border. We cannot judge very well of your composition and grammar from so short a letter, but your last sentence is a little awkward, and your handwriting has the worst fault possible—it is difficult to read.

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